



Students' Perspectives Towards English Academic Competence Test (TKA)

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui persepsi siswa terhadap Tes Kompetensi Akademik (TKA) Bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain deskriptif kuantitatif yang melibatkan 40 siswa SMA di Medan, Indonesia, yang dipilih melalui teknik purposive sampling. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan kuesioner skala Likert yang terdiri atas 20 item dan mencakup lima dimensi, yaitu persepsi umum, tingkat kesulitan dan pemahaman, pengalaman mengerjakan tes, dampak terhadap pembelajaran, serta kendala dan harapan. Hasil pengujian instrumen menunjukkan bahwa 15 item dinyatakan valid dan instrumen memiliki reliabilitas tinggi (Cronbach's Alpha = 0,861). Analisis statistik deskriptif menunjukkan bahwa siswa secara umum memiliki persepsi positif terhadap TKA Bahasa Inggris dengan nilai mean keseluruhan sebesar 3,03. Dimensi dampak terhadap pembelajaran memperoleh nilai mean tertinggi ($M = 3,23$), yang menunjukkan bahwa siswa memandang TKA bermanfaat dalam membantu mengidentifikasi kelemahan dan mendukung peningkatan kemampuan Bahasa Inggris. Namun, siswa masih mengalami kesulitan dalam penguasaan kosakata, pemahaman bacaan, dan soal yang menuntut kemampuan berpikir tingkat tinggi (HOTS). Temuan ini mengimplikasikan perlunya penguatan literasi, pengayaan kosakata, dan pengembangan keterampilan berpikir kritis dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris guna meningkatkan kesiapan siswa menghadapi asesmen akademik.

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on examining students' perceptions of the English Academic Competence Test (TKA). The study employed a quantitative descriptive design involving 40 high school students in Medan, Indonesia, who were selected using purposive sampling. Data were collected using a Likert-scale questionnaire consisting of 20 items and covering five dimensions: general perception, level of difficulty and comprehension, test-taking experience, impact on learning, and obstacles and expectations. The instrument validation results indicated that 15 items were deemed valid, and the instrument demonstrated high reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.861). Descriptive statistical analysis indicates that students generally have a positive perception of the English TKA, with an overall mean score of 3.03. The "impact on learning" dimension received the highest mean score ($M = 3.23$), suggesting that students view the TKA as beneficial in helping identify weaknesses and supporting improvements in English proficiency. However, students still face difficulties in vocabulary mastery, reading comprehension, and questions requiring higher-order thinking skills (HOTS). These findings imply the need to strengthen literacy, enrich vocabulary, and develop critical thinking skills in English language learning to improve students' readiness for academic assessments.

1. INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language and serves an important role in preparing students to participate in academic, social, and global communication. As educational expectations continue to evolve, assessment has become an essential component of language learning because it provides information about students' competency development and learning achievement (Sya et al., 2025). English is one of the key subjects in Indonesia's education system, particularly at the high school level. English is a subject which has been introduced since primary education. Certain institutions consider it an optional activity, whereas others have made it mandatory for both elementary and higher education (Sya & Helmanto, 2020). As part of education system, evaluation or assessment of learning is

important because it serves to measure students' achievement of competencies. In context of English language learning, evaluation serves not only as a tool for measuring students' linguistic abilities, but also as a means of determining their readiness to meet academic demands and the challenges of globalization. Therefore, English language assessment, especially reading skills, is a crucial competency for students to possess.

In an educational context, reading skills in English are not limited to understand information literally but also encompass higher-order thinking skills, such as drawing conclusions (inference), evaluating text content, and appreciating the meaning and use of language. These competencies align with the demands of 21st-century learning, which emphasizes the development of critical, creative, and analytical thinking skills. One of the government's efforts to measure students' academic competency achievements is through the implementation of the Academic Competence Test (TKA). The TKA is designed to assess the extent to which students are able to understand and process information, particularly in the context of reading literacy. In English subject, the TKA focuses on various aspects of text comprehension that reflect students' cognitive ability levels.

English Academic Competence Test (TKA) assesses reading skills across a variety of English-language texts in various every-day, vocational, and academic communication contexts. English TKA is a combination of text types, communication contexts, topics, and text complexity from the 2013 Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum. Regarding text types, English TKA uses descriptive, recount, narrative, procedural, and analytical exposition texts. Regarding communication contexts, the TKA uses texts that proportionally reflect every-day, workplace, and academic communication. Regarding the topics, English TKA uses texts with topics that combine elements from both curricula, while avoiding technical vocabulary that is rarely used in communication (Pusat Asesmen Pendidikan, 2025).

Text complexity in English TKA is aligned with the proficiency levels targeted in the 2013 Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum. Both curricula aim for students to achieve proficiency at the intermediate or B1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). English Academic Competence Test (TKA) covers three levels of proficiency in reading skills: textual comprehension, inferential comprehension, and evaluation and appreciation. The following outlines these proficiency levels along with the sub-competencies for each level. Textual Comprehension is the ability to understand explicit information, organize, restructure, and restate explicit information from a text. Inferential Comprehension is the ability to draw conclusions based on implicit information in the text, personal experience, and intuition to understand the text's content. Evaluation and Appreciation are the ability to assess ideas, respond to the text emotionally and aesthetically by considering its impact on feelings, imagination, and the author's use of language

English Academic Competence Test (TKA) for high school students, as a replacement of National Examination which was discontinued in 2021, was conducted in early November 2025 in several sessions. Generally, English TKA took place from November 1 to 9, 2025. However, the main exam was divided into several sessions: Session 1 on November 3–4, 2025; Session 2 on November 5–6, 2025; and an additional session on November 8–9, 2025. In practice, the English subject was tested on the first day along with other required subjects, namely Indonesian and Mathematics. Thus, for participants taking Wave 1, the English TKA was held on November 3, 2025, while for participants in Wave 2, it is held on November 5, 2025. Each English exam session lasted approximately 45 minutes.

The students' English TKA scores are quite disappointing. The average of English TKA score is regarded low (Tempo, 2025). The data on English TKA for Senior High School students in English presents a broad overview of student performance across Indonesia. A total of 43,424 schools participated, involving 3,462,201 students, indicating a very large-scale assessment. Overall, the average score achieved by students is 24.93 out of a maximum possible score of 100, with the minimum score recorded at 0.00 (Kemendikdasmen, 2025a). Regarding the proficiency levels, the findings are categorized into three main competencies in reading skills. First, textual comprehension shows the highest achievement at 32.77%. This indicates that students are relatively more competent in understanding explicit information in texts, such as identifying details, organizing ideas, and restating information. Second, inferential comprehension reaches 28.53%. This suggests that a slightly smaller proportion of students are able to draw conclusions from implicit information, combining textual clues with prior knowledge and intuition. While this skill is moderately developed, it remains more challenging than basic textual understanding. Finally, evaluation and appreciation record the lowest percentage at 17.43%. This competency involves higher-order thinking skills, such as critically evaluating ideas, responding to texts emotionally and aesthetically, and analyzing the author's use of language. The low percentage indicates that many students still struggle with deeper interpretation and critical engagement with texts (Kemendikdasmen, 2025b).

Based on the data above, it is concluded that English teaching in schools still faces several challenges. The learning process often emphasizes memorization and surface-level understanding, which may not fully

support the development of students' critical thinking skills. In addition, factors such as teaching methods, teacher readiness, student motivation, and the availability of learning resources also influence students' learning outcomes. On the other hand, students' perspectives on the English Academic Competence Test (TKA) play a crucial role, as these perceptions can influence their learning process, mental readiness, motivation, and academic performance. In the context of educational evaluation, students are not merely the objects of assessment but also the primary subjects who directly experience the impact of the assessment system in place. Therefore, understanding students' perceptions of the English Academic Competence Test (TKA) is essential for determining how this policy is viewed from the perspective of education practitioners.

Perspective can be defined as an individual's interpretation and evaluation of experiences or phenomena based on the information and stimuli received from the environment. Through this process, individuals develop particular viewpoints that influence their attitudes, judgments, and responses toward a specific object or situation. In the educational context, students' perspectives play an important role in shaping their attitudes toward learning activities, assessment practices, and academic achievement (Wijaya, 2022; Sujarwo et al., 2020). According to Walgito, the perceptual process involves the reception of stimuli, the processing of stimuli, and interpretation (Walgito, 2010). According to Stephen P. Robbins, perception is the process by which individuals organize and interpret their sensory impressions to make sense of their environment. Robbins explains that perception is how people arrange and understand their sensory experiences to comprehend their surroundings. In the context of this study, individual characteristics refer to students' English TKA, the object is the English proficiency test, while the situation includes the learning environment and the administration of the test (Robbins, 2001). Therefore, perspective is not merely concerned with how individuals interpret current experiences, but also with how these interpretations contribute to broader understanding and future development. Through perspective, individuals can expand their viewpoints, gain new insights, and build foundations for future learning and personal growth (Susandi et al., 2022). Positive perceptions can encourage better readiness and participation, while negative perceptions may hinder the learning process and the achievement of optimal outcomes. Considering the fact above, it is important to conduct a study that examines the implementation of English TKA at the senior high school level, particularly focusing the students' perspectives as well as the factors influencing students' competency achievement.

Many studies have been undertaken regarding students' views on learning the English language evaluations. Sa'adah in her research indicated that students showed favorable views about language online assessment. Descriptive statistics revealed that the students typically opted for the online evaluation instead of the traditional paper format (Sa'adah & Hentasmaka, 2024). Efendi in his research demonstrated that the students respond positively to all dimensions of their perceptions regarding online assessment. The greatest average is in security context. The average is 4.13. Then the average of validity (4.03), the dependability (3.80), the practicality (3.77), pedagogy (3.50), affective factors (3.30). Out of the 18 statements in the survey, seventeen statements received a favorable perception, whereas one viewpoint concerning online assessment may decrease. the stress and anxiety led to the unfavorable outlook (Efendi & Syafryadin, 2025). Maeyasningrum in her research showed that students typically had favorable to very favorable perceptions of formative assessment. Essential elements factors influencing this perception involved quick teacher responses, engaging classroom dialogues, and the incorporation of digital resources. Students additionally stated that formative assessment enhanced their confidence, their comprehension of the subject, and allowed them to feel better equipped for assessments (Maeyasningrum et al., 2025). Syafrayani in her study revealed a complex interplay between usability, fairness, and performance impact. While some students appreciated the efficiency and immediate feedback of digital tests, many expressed concerns over interface unfamiliarity, limited digital literacy, and heightened test anxiety, which they felt adversely affected their performance (Syafrayani & Meisuri, 2025). Rahmat in his study revealed that participants underscored the significance of obtaining evaluation links in progress and felt conflicted regarding deadlines. Although the instant feedback function was valued, inconsistent application resulted in demands for more comprehensive replies (Rahmat et al., 2024).

Previous studies have examined students' perceptions of various forms of English language learning assessment, such as online assessments, digital-based tests, and formative assessments (Sa'adah & Hentasmaka, 2024; Efendi & Syafryadin, 2025; Maeyasningrum et al., 2025; Syafrayani & Meisuri, 2025; Rahmat et al., 2024). These studies generally focus on aspects of practicality, validity, reliability, feedback, student anxiety, and experiences with technology use in the assessment process. The results indicate that most students hold positive perceptions of technology-based assessments, although some challenges remain, such as limited digital literacy, test anxiety, and technical issues during the assessment process.

Nevertheless, these studies were conducted in the context of online assessments or formative assessments, which differ from the English Academic Ability Test (TKA). The TKA is a standardized

assessment designed to measure students' academic competencies more comprehensively and plays a crucial role in the educational evaluation system. Therefore, the findings from previous studies cannot fully explain how students perceive the administration of the English TKA.

Furthermore, most previous studies have only examined students' general perceptions of assessments and have not yet thoroughly examined key aspects related to the implementation of the TKA, such as students' readiness for the test, the alignment of the test material with what they learn in school, the impact of the TKA on students' motivation and learning processes, and the various challenges encountered during the test administration. Furthermore, research on students' perceptions of the English TKA remains very limited, given that this policy has only recently been implemented.

Based on the explanation above, there is a research gap in terms of both context and focus. Therefore, this study aims to explore students' perceptions of the English Academic Ability Test (TKA) and to identify the obstacles they face in taking the test.

2. METHODS

In order to gain a thorough grasp of students' perspectives towards English TKA, this research utilized a mixed-methods framework that integrated quantitative and qualitative methods (Creswell J. David & Creswell and John W., 2018). The participants were 40 senior high school students who have taken English TKA coming from State Senior High School dan Private Senior High School in Medan. The schools were SMAN 13 Medan, Madrasah Aliyah Negeri, and SMAS Dharma Pancasila. The participants were selected using purposive sampling because they had already experienced taking or preparing for the English Academic Competency Test. Therefore, they were considered capable of providing relevant information regarding their perceptions of the test. Data for this study were gathered using a closed-ended questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The questionnaire comprised five sections. Each section consists of four questions. The first section asked general perception about English TKA. The second section asked difficulty level and comprehension about English TKA. The third section asked about the experience in taking English TKA. The fourth section asked about the impact on learning. The last section asked about challenges and hopes about English TKA implementation.

Participants answered these questions utilizing a four-point Likert scale that ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The closed format questionnaire was shared online through Google Forms. Following the completion of the questionnaire, face-to-face semi-structured interviews took place. These interviews featured five questions aimed at elucidating participants' perspectives on English TKA. A total of ten participants willingly opted to engage in the interviews. The researcher and each participant agreed on an appropriate time for the interview, which lasted between 5 and 10 minutes for each individual. The data collected from both methods were analyzed accordingly, utilizing quantitative methods for the questionnaire findings and qualitative approaches for the interview feedback. A fundamental statistical analysis of the questionnaire data was carried out using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 30.0, while the interview data underwent qualitative analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Before data analysis was conducted, the research instrument was first tested for validity and reliability to ensure that the questionnaire could accurately and consistently measure students' perceptions of the English Academic Competency Test (TKA). The validity assessment involved Pearson's product-moment correlation, linking the score of each question with the overall score. An item was considered valid if its correlation coefficient exceeded the *r*-table value at a significance threshold of 0.05. The reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha to evaluate the instrument's internal consistency, which was considered reliable if the Cronbach's Alpha value was greater than 0.70.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

After finishing the analysis of the survey and interview data, the results are organized according to themes that correspond to the research inquiries. Each theme merges numerical data, conveyed as percentages of responses, with qualitative snippets that enhance understanding and richness.

Table 1. General Perceptions of English TKA

	Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	English TKA is important for assessing my English proficiency.	2,5 %	7,5 %	40 %	50 %
2.	English TKA reflects my actual English proficiency.	5 %	12,5 %	47,5 %	35 %
3.	I understand the purpose of English TKA.	2,5 %	15 %	42,5 %	40 %
4.	I feel that English TKA is beneficial for my learning.	15 %	12,5 %	37,5 %	35 %

Table 2. Difficulty Level and Comprehension

	Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	English TKA questions are easy to understand.	10 %	30 %	45 %	15 %
2.	The difficulty level of the questions matches my ability.	2,5 %	27,5 %	50 %	20 %
3.	I am able to understand the text in English TKA questions.	2,5 %	7,5 %	60 %	30 %
4.	I have difficulty answering questions that require analysis (HOTS).	5 %	25 %	50 %	20 %

Table 3. Experience Taking English TKA

	Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	I felt confident while taking English TKA.	5 %	12,5 %	50 %	32,5 %
2.	The time allotted was sufficient to complete the test.	17,5 %	22,5 %	40 %	20 %
3.	I felt anxious while taking English TKA.	20 %	27,5 %	35 %	17,5 %
4.	I prepared well before English TKA.	0	17,5 %	52,5 %	30 %

Table 4. Impact on Learning

	Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	English TKA makes me more motivated to learn English.	2,5 %	10 %	60 %	27,5 %
2.	English TKA helps me identify my weaknesses in English.	0	12,5 %	52,5 %	35 %
3.	English TKA helps improve my reading skills.	0	7,5 %	47,5 %	45 %
4.	I practice questions more often after learning about English TKA.	2,5 %	15 %	45 %	37,5 %

Table 5. Challenges and Hopes

	Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	I have difficulty understanding the vocabulary in the questions.	7,5 %	25 %	50 %	17,5 %
2.	I have trouble understanding the content of long texts.	12,5 %	25 %	47,5 %	15 %
3.	I hope English TKA questions will be easier to understand.	0	10 %	37,5 %	52,5 %
4.	I hope the teacher will provide more practice related to English TKA.	0	10 %	42,5 %	47,5 %

Analysis of the questionnaire data shows that, in general, students have a positive perception of the English Academic Competency Test (TKA), with an overall mean score of 3.03. Based on the interpretation

categories used, this score falls into the high category, indicating that students view the TKA as an important and useful instrument for measuring their English proficiency.

The research instrument consisted of 20 items used to measure students' perceptions of the English Academic Competency Test (TKA). Validity testing was conducted using Pearson's Product-Moment correlation on 40 respondents. The analysis results showed that 15 items had correlation values greater than the r-table value (0.312), thus they were deemed valid. Meanwhile, five items had correlation values below the r-table. These items were mostly negative statements related to students' anxiety when taking the test and difficulties in understanding the questions. Nevertheless, these items were retained to preserve the comprehensiveness of the construct being measured.

Next, Reliability analysis using Cronbach's Alpha yielded a coefficient of 0.861 for the 20-item questionnaire. Since the obtained value exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, the instrument was considered highly reliable and suitable for measuring students' perceptions of the English Academic Competency Test (TKA).

Discussion

This study aims to investigate students' perceptions of the English Academic Proficiency Test (TKA) and the challenges they face during the assessment process. Overall, the findings indicate that students have a positive perception of the English TKA and acknowledge its role in measuring their English proficiency and supporting their academic development. The majority of participants believe that the test reflects their actual language ability and understand its purpose as an assessment tool. These findings suggest that students view assessment not merely as a formal requirement, but as a meaningful mechanism for evaluating learning outcomes. Such perceptions are important because students' acceptance of assessment practices can influence their engagement, motivation, and learning behaviors.

Positive perceptions of the English TKA align with assessment theories that emphasize that students tend to benefit more from assessment when they understand its purpose and view it as fair and relevant to their learning goals. Assessment is most effective when students view it as a source of feedback, rather than merely a tool for assigning grades. In this study, students' beliefs regarding the validity and usefulness of the English proficiency test indicate that the assessment has achieved a relatively high level of acceptance among students.

One of the key findings of this study concerns the impact of TKA on motivation. Most students reported that the assessment encouraged them to study English more seriously, practice more frequently, and become more aware of their strengths and weaknesses. This finding is consistent with previous research showing that well-designed assessments can foster a positive washback effect on learning. A positive washback effect occurs when assessment encourages students to engage in productive learning activities, improve their study habits, and develop a greater sense of responsibility for their academic progress. In this study, the TKA appears to function not only as an evaluation tool but also as a catalyst for learning, motivating students to make greater efforts to improve their English proficiency.

The findings also indicate that the TKA contributes to students' academic self-awareness. Most participants reported that the assessment helped them identify weaknesses in their English language skills and encouraged them to focus on areas needing improvement. These results align with the concept of assessment for learning, which emphasizes the role of assessment in providing information that supports future learning processes. Rather than viewing assessment solely as a measure of achievement, students appear to use TKA results as feedback for self-reflection and academic improvement.

A further challenge identified in this study involves Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) questions. Most students acknowledged difficulties when answering items that required analysis, interpretation, evaluation, and critical reasoning. This finding indicates that students may be more familiar with lower-level cognitive tasks than with analytical and evaluative activities commonly found in competency-based assessments. The result also suggests that classroom instruction may need to provide greater opportunities for students to engage in critical reading, problem-solving, and evidence-based reasoning. Regular exposure to HOTS-oriented activities could help students develop the cognitive skills necessary to succeed in assessments such as the TKA.

The study additionally revealed that psychological factors continue to influence students' testing experiences. Although most participants reported feeling confident and adequately prepared before taking the examination, a considerable proportion still experienced anxiety during the test. This finding suggests that academic preparation alone may not completely eliminate test-related stress. Anxiety may arise from concerns about performance, fear of failure, unfamiliar question formats, or perceived difficulty levels. Consequently, teachers should not only focus on academic preparation but also provide emotional support and confidence-building strategies to help students approach assessments more positively.

Time management emerged as another important issue. Some students perceived the allotted examination time as insufficient, particularly when answering lengthy reading passages and HOTS-oriented questions. This challenge appears closely related to students' vocabulary limitations and reading proficiency. Students who require more time to comprehend texts are likely to experience greater pressure during examinations. Therefore, classroom activities should include timed reading exercises and test-taking strategies that enable students to process information more efficiently.

The findings of this study have several pedagogical implications. First, English teachers should place greater emphasis on vocabulary development through systematic and contextualized learning activities. Second, reading instruction should focus not only on comprehension but also on strategic reading skills that help students navigate complex texts. Third, HOTS-oriented learning activities should be integrated more consistently into classroom practice to strengthen students' analytical and critical thinking abilities. Finally, schools should provide students with regular opportunities to engage with TKA-style tasks so that they become familiar with question formats, develop confidence, and improve time-management skills.

Overall, this study demonstrates that students view the English TKA positively and recognize its contribution to their learning development. However, challenges related to vocabulary mastery, reading comprehension, higher-order thinking skills, test anxiety, and time management remain significant concerns. These findings suggest that the effectiveness of the TKA depends not only on the quality of the assessment itself but also on the extent to which students are adequately supported through instructional practices that develop the linguistic, cognitive, and psychological skills required for successful performance.

4. CONCLUSION

This study found that students generally have positive perceptions of the English Academic Competency Test (TKA). Most students view the TKA as an important and useful instrument for measuring their English proficiency, helping them identify their strengths and weaknesses, and motivating them to improve their learning. These findings indicate that the TKA functions not only as an assessment tool but also as a means of enhancing students' awareness of their academic competency development.

However, the study also identified several challenges faced by students, particularly in understanding vocabulary, comprehending longer texts, and answering questions that require Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). These findings imply that English language instruction should place greater emphasis on literacy development, vocabulary enhancement, reading comprehension, and critical thinking skills to better prepare students for academic assessments. Furthermore, the results of this study may serve as valuable input for teachers, schools, and educational policymakers in designing more effective instructional strategies and support programs to improve students' readiness for the TKA.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. First, the relatively small number of participants and the fact that they were drawn from only several schools limit the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, future research is recommended to involve a larger sample size and participants from diverse schools or regions in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of students' perceptions of the TKA. Additionally, future studies may explore other factors influencing students' perceptions and performance in the TKA, such as learning strategies, test anxiety, and educational background.

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