

EXPLORING STUDENTS' VOICES ON SNBT ENGLISH LITERACY: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY APPROACH

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Abstract: This research study examines the challenges encountered by high school students in Indonesia while acquiring English literacy skills for the National Selection Based on Test (SNBT) examination. The research uses a narrative inquiry methodology to gather qualitative data from two participants who come from diverse backgrounds. The researcher aims to gain a thorough understanding of the participants' experiences, perceptions, and challenges associated with the SNBT examination. Using open-ended questions and probing techniques, the researcher was able to identify recurring themes, patterns, and significant insights. Thematic analysis was employed to identify and analyze the main themes and sub-themes that emerged from the respondents' narratives. The findings of the research indicate that language, psychological, and environmental challenges were identified as the primary obstacles. The findings underscore the significance of catering the varied learning needs of students, including language support and personalized instruction. Moreover, offering explicit guidance on the format and requirements of the SNBT test can better prepare students for success. Additionally, integrating technology, such as online resource and tools, into the language curriculum can enhance engagement and provide valuable learning opportunities. These recommendations aim to empower students by equipping them with the necessary tools and support to navigate the challenges of English literacy acquisition and excel in the SNBT examination.

Keywords: *challenges; English literacy; SNBT; students' voices.*

INTRODUCTION

The process of gaining admission to public universities in Indonesia present a significant obstacle for high school students (Mukminina & Abidin, 2020), as the regulations governing this process undergo frequent changes. Widiyanto, (2023) reports that, in 2022, a total of 800,825 students applied for college, but only 192,810 of them were able to secure admission. This implies that a mere 24,07% of the students who applied were deemed eligible to pursue higher education at public universities in Indonesia. Then, based on the information referenced from (Rismadayanti, 2021), it was reported that the test course was designed with challenging level of difficulty, characterized by numerous tight turns and bends.

Furthermore, the national selection based on test (SNBT) comprises multiple section, each of

which assesses different aspect of the candidates' abilities (Sutarjo, 2022). As per information presented on the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture's website, the test evaluates five specific areas, including potential for scholarship, mathematical reasoning, proficiency in Indonesian language, and proficiency in English. In this research places greater emphasis on the English proficiency test that is administered as part of the SNBT. The English proficiency assessment on the state university examination differs from the English language evaluation administered in schools. The SNBT test relatively high level difficulty with its uses of scientific and academic terminology in the selection of words (McArthur et al., 2018). As a result, students may encounter unfamiliar vocabulary as they may have been exposed to these terms during their school

education (Viridiana, 2021).

Moreover, the incorporation of English language aptitude into the SNBT endeavors to furnish students with the linguistic capability indispensable for adeptly maneuvering through a plethora of worldwide predicaments (Sabillawati & Ardiana, 2022). This accentuation on language proficiencies recognizes the pivotal function English fulfills in cultivating intercontinental communication and comprehension, advocating for a holistic educational methodology. Additionally, this ensures a standardized level of language competency across diverse academic disciplines. Proficiency in English is paramount for effective communication and comprehension, fostering a conducive learning environment. The English proficiency test serves as a valuable tool to gauge and enhance students' linguistic abilities, promoting overall academic success (Nasution, 2022). In contrast, the general school setting, teachers tend to overly prioritize the cognitive aspect of learning English, which can create challenges for students in preparing for their SNBT exams (Oktaviana et al., 2021; Saluky & Marine, 2021). This is due to the peculiar selection and language utilized in the English subject of the SNBT test.

Furthermore, the previous studies have identified various challenges encountered by students during the process of preparing for and participating in the college entrance examination via written test (Hindrayani et al., 2021; Putri et al., 2022; Sabillawati & Ardiana, 2022; Sutarjo, 2022; Widiyanto, 2023; Yunanda et al., 2022). Moreover, prior investigations have delved into the strategies employed by students to effectively navigate and surmount these challenges. For instance, Widiyanto, (2023) conducted an empirical study centred around debriefing sessions geared towards the SNBT administered to students at an Islamic private school in West Java. This study revealed that students encountered notable difficulties during the SNBT assessment, warranting supplementary training interventions to enhance their performance. In contrast, Yunanda et al., (2022) conducted a research inquiry that centered on the challenges students grapple with when confronted with problem-solving tasks within the realm of SNBT's reading section. The outcomes of Yunanda's investigation highlighted that a considerable proportions of students faced challenges in effectively addressing SNBT problems, predominantly attributing their struggles to impediments in vocabulary interpretation and insufficient proficiency in comprehending English

written texts.

Followed by the previous study, it can be inferred that students who are preparing for the SNBT encounter various challenges, particularly with regard to reading comprehension and test-taking skills. Some studies have focused on the difficulties that students face in understanding English vocabulary and reading passages, while others have explored the efficacy of debriefing sessions in improving SNBT performance. However, there appears to be a research gap in the identification of specific strategies that can help students overcome these challenges and achieve better result in SNBT. Therefore, further research is necessary to explore effective strategies for improving students' proficiency in English Literacy and SNBT preparation, particularly in the context of Indonesian High schools. Consequently, the researcher has formulated research questions that aim to investigate (1) what the particular obstacles that students encounter while studying English Literacy for SNBT preparation? And (2) how students develop effective learning strategies for English literacy to prepare for SNBT?

METHOD

The present study featured two respondents with different educational background. The first respondent attended a public school situated in the Pasuruan district, which has a noteworthy reputation for facilitating state higher education entrance examinations. Conversely, the affiliation. Nevertheless, unlike the first participant, the school attended by the second respondent has a subpar record regarding preparing their students to pursue higher education at the state level

Table 1. *School background*

No	School	Types	Accreditation	Location
1	A	State	A	Pasuruan
2	B	Private	C	Pasuruan

Table 2. *Participants' background*

No	Name (Pseudonym)	Gender	School	Reason Join SNBT
1	Prince	Male	A	Not Passed
2	Siti	Female	B	Ineligible

The research study utilizes a narrative inquiry methodology, which the researcher believe is well-suited for examining subjects that delve into the individual experiences of the study participants (Clandinin & Huber, 2006; Sudarwati et al., 2022; Ubaidillah & Widiati, 2022). Guided by these

considerations, the present study opted to gather narrative data from a pair of respondents hailing from disparate sociocultural contexts. The researcher deems it imperative to undertake a comprehensive inquiry into the participants' journey of attaining English literacy proficiencies in the context of preparing for the SNBT. The principal objective of the researcher revolves around attaining a nuanced comprehension of the participants' perceptions, dispositions, and impediments encountered during the process of cultivating English literacy skills in anticipation of SNBT readiness.

For the purpose of this research, the researcher employed the interview methodology as the primary means of data collection. Interview were conducted with participants to gather relevant and insightful data regarding their experiences, perceptions, and challenges related to acquiring English literacy skills for the SNBT examination. Moreover, the use of interviews allowed for in-depth exploration and understanding of the participants' perspective, providing rich qualitative data. Through open-ended questions and probing techniques, the research was able to delve into the nuances of the participants' experiences, allowing for a comprehensive examination of the research topic.

Furthermore, in this research, unstructured interviews were conducted with the participants to encourage them to freely express their thoughts, feelings, and insights in their own words (Bihu, 2020; Chauhan, 2022). The choice of an unstructured interview format allowed for a more open and flexible conversation, enabling participants to share their experiences related to acquiring English literacy skills for the SNBT examination in a comprehensive manner. Likewise, to interviews were conducted using the online media platform WhatsApp Calls, which offered convenience and ease of communication for both the researcher and the participants. This choice of online media aligned with the practical considerations of the study, considering the participants' limited time availability and the widespread use of WhatsApp in the daily activities (Kaufmann & Peil, 2020; Mirick & Wladkowski, 2019).

After collecting the data, the analysis involved a careful examination of the narrative data provided by the two respondents. In this case, paradigmatic analysis is used to transfer the data into description across the stories (Polkinghorne, 2003). In detail, the researcher closely reviewed and transcribed the interviews to identify recurring

themes, patterns, and significant insights. The data were then organized and categorized based on these emerging themes. Moreover, A thematic analysis approach was employed to identify and analyze the main themes and sub-themes that emerged from the respondents' narratives. The researcher used open coding techniques to generate initial codes, followed by a process of constant comparison and refinement to develop more refined and coherent themes. The identified themes were then examined in relation to the research questions and objectives.

In addition, to ensure the trustworthiness of the data, researcher take measures to establish its trustworthiness. One such method is data saturation, which involves conducting multiple interviews until no new information can be gathered, indicating that the data has reached a level of saturation (Fusch, P & Ness, L, 2015; Sebele-Mpofu, F, 2020) This ensures that data collected is thoroughly confirmed and exhaustive.

Table 3. *Example of data analysis*

No	Data	Code	Themes
1	"... I can't understand about how to interpretation the diction."	Vocabulary	Language Challenges
2	"My parents never give me support in mental, when I learn English so that I have to deserve it...."	Mental	Psychological Issue
3	"... I'm used to studying together with my friends..."	Discussion	Strategy

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

During the process of data collection, the researchers obtained information from study participants. This data was subsequently subjected to a coding model and organized according to the specific research questions being investigated. The researcher identified two main themes based on the findings, namely the challenges encountered by students in their pursuit of English literacy for the purpose of SNBT test preparation, and the primary strategies employed to surmount the students' obstacles in the acquisition of English literacy for the purpose of SNBT test preparation.

The students' challenges in learning English literacy for SNBT preparation

One of the major hurdles for students is the challenge posed by language. Prince has highlighted that he experiences a language barrier primarily in the process of sentence translation. He contends that the difficulty he encounters in translating arises from his tendency to rely on the literal meaning of English words, and the subsequent need to rephrase them into academic language:

Achieving proficiency in the English language can be an arduous task, particularly for individuals who do not have a strong background in speaking it. Translating text from one language to another can prove to be difficult, as it may lead to word-for-word translations that miss the intended meaning. Additionally, the English language contains a plethora of unusual expressions and idiomatic phrases that do not necessarily convey their intended meaning when translated literally.”

The result is congruent with the research of ktaviana et al., (2021), wherein a predominant proportion of student encountered challenges related to translation consistently across all test trial. Moreover, Prince encountered challenges in English translation due to various factors, including deficient English proficiency. Notably, his limited interest in English literature hindered his language development. This lack of engagement with English texts potentially contributed to his struggles in accurate translations.

Furthermore, Siti has reported experiencing difficulty in translating English texts and comprehending written English material, which has resulted in challenges for her in reading English-language texts:

” The issue that I am currently encountering pertains to the significant volume of reading materials that I must contend with. As a reader, I tend to shy away from lengthy texts, particularly those presented in challenging English language as seen in the SNBT questions. Additionally, I experience difficulty deciphering unfamiliar English words found in the SNBT assessment.”

According to Siti's statement, she elucidated encountering impediments associated with the volume of written material she need to incorporate. Siti expounded her inclination for extensive textual passages, particularly those composed employing

intricate English, analogous to the linguistic complexity prevalent in SNBT inquiries. This inclination stems from the varying proficiency levels exhibited by students in comprehending English textual content. It is line with Rina & Tiarina, (2021) who argued that students find it difficult to understand diction and vocabulary at a high level. Consequently, Siti encountered obstacles in deciphering the foreign nuances of English diction encountered within SNBT contexts.

Furthermore, During the investigation, the research conducted interviews to understand the reason behind the challenges that students faced in learning English literacy. The result revealed a correlation between the teaching style of the English teacher, Prince, and the difficulties experienced by the students. Specifically, the participants reported that Prince's tendency to speak English quickly posed a hindrance to their comprehension of the language. This finding highlights the impact of the teaching approach on the students' learning outcomes and underscores the importance of considering instructional strategies that cater to diverse learning needs.

”The pace at which the English teacher at my school speaks is exceedingly fast, making it difficult for a vast majority of the students to keep up. Her speech delivery is rapid, akin to lightning speed. Adding to the challenge, My teacher never told me about the information of English test format for the SNBT. Consequently, students are left feeling bewildered and uncertain about how to prepare adequately for the test, causing significant frustration.”

According to the information proofed by Prince, he posits that his challenges in comprehending English inquiries emanate, in part, from his instruction's pedagogical methodology characterized by its lack of engagement and monotonous disposition. Prince contends that instructional discourse should eschew undue celerity, thereby facilitating the assimilation of conveyed information. This phenomenon appears to be recurrent among various students grappling with the apprehension of English language content (Hindrayani et al., 2021).

Moreover, the absence of an Introductory module on the subject Non-language based test (SNBT) in schools, particularly in English literacy education, poses challenges for student in comprehending the various questions types that will be assessed. In Prince's perspective, he did not

receive any SNBT introduction during his schooling years. A new school, however, offers a one-month SNBT preparation program leading up to the exam. In light of this particular case, the insufficient provision of preparatory resources by the educational institution renders the acquisition of comprehensive understanding regarding the SNBT system notably arduous for students. This case also happened in research conducted by Yunanda et al., (2022). In the study, it was observed that a significant proportion of students primarily relied on study guidance as their primary source of information regarding college entrance exams. This prevailing pattern of information acquisition was found to have notable implications for the level of preparedness exhibited by students when confronting these examinations. Furthermore, Yunanda et al., (2022) elucidated that a considerable number of students tended to engage in relatively brief and abrupt periods of exam preparation.

Moreover, In the previous challenges, students have faced difficulties in language management and translating English literacy questions. Further investigation through in-depth interviews revealed that these language-related issues led to additional psychological problems. In this case, Siti has expressed that her inadequate comprehension skills in interpreting individual words and sentences in English has led to feelings of stress and apathy towards preparing for the English literacy section exam. She perceives that when attempting to read literacy-related problems, her cognitive processing appears to be impaired, and she struggles to grasp the meaning of the text. Consequently, she believes that she cannot comprehend the problems accurately. This psychological issue aligns with the observations made by Mukminina & Abidin, (2020), who identified a correlation between anxiety disorders among students and their struggles with the phenomenon of SNBT. To elaborate further, the challenges of comprehending examination questions induces anxiety among students, primarily driven by their persistent concern regarding the outcomes, which serve as a pivotal metric for their academic achievements.

On the other hand, Prince perceived that he was encountering psychological distress upon becoming acquainted with the SNBT test system, especially in relation to the segment assessing English literacy:

“When I was a student in my school, my teacher was informed about the SNBT, an entrance exam for state universities that included a section on English literacy. Initially,

I believed that the English literacy portion would be effortless, based on the information provided by the school. However, upon commencing practice for the test, I discovered that the English section was much more challenging than anticipated, leading to feelings of stress and disappointment.”

According to the data above, Prince explain that he was apprised of the SNBT, a university entrance examination, that incorporated a section on English literacy. Initially, Prince held the belief that the English literacy component would be uncomplicated. In this case, insufficient guidance to students regarding the question formats, scoring mechanisms, and psychological fortification contributes to students’ surprise during the actual test (Rismadayanti, 2021).

Much like Prince’s viewpoint, Siti’s initial experience with English literacy questions caused her to feel uncertain and insecure. Siti’s assumption was that the exam would only cover content from grades ten to twelve. Furthermore, Siti indicated that she encountered considerable anxiety owing to the perceived complexity of the assessment materials:

”I held an initial assumption that the SNBT questions would be straightforward given their familiarity with the material studied in grade 12. However, to their surprise, it discovered that the scope of the questions encompassed much more than anticipated. Consequently, I recognized the need to devote additional effort towards preparation and acquisition of knowledge beyond my initial plan. I acknowledged underestimating the test and acknowledged the necessity of revising my preparation strategy. My assumption was to achieve excellent results and compensate for any missed concepts. However, the task proved challenging, with my reporting feelings of exhaustion and difficulty maintaining focus, especially with the challenging nature of the English material.”

Furthermore, conducting further research, the researcher procured data regarding the challenges encountered by students during their preparation for the English literacy test on the SNBT pathway. The finding revealed that students perceived environmental hindrances that impeded their ability to learn English in readiness for the SNBT. This finding aligns with the research conducted by Agistiawati and Asbari, (2020), which assumes that the surrounding environment of students significantly influences their academic

achievement. Furthermore, Prince reported that his immediate family was a source of obstacle in his academic pursuits. Specifically, some of his close relatives showed little interest in his academic progress and did not provide support or encouragement:

"The environmental circumstances that surround me have a consequential impact on my academic performance and family support. Specifically, my family exhibits a lack of concern for my studies when I engage in practice exercises for SNBT. Furthermore, interruptions during study sessions, such as being asked to perform household chores, adversely affect my grades. Additionally, the environment in which I live appears to have an impact on my English literacy skills, as there is a dearth of support for their development. The general lack of English language proficiency among the individuals in my vicinity leads to a paucity of exposure to English vocabulary, which hampers my efforts to improve my English proficiency."

Based on the preceding information, Prince expressed that the environment in which he resides poses a significant obstacle to his pursuit of English literacy proficiency. He underscored that individuals in his immediate surroundings generally perceive English as the language of education, thereby making it challenging to garner support for English language mastery, particularly in the domain of literacy.

Siti holds a view contrary to Prince's, asserting that the impediments originating from her environment stem from her social circle. Siti experienced feelings of insecurity as she observed her friends seemingly exhibiting greater ease in completing English literacy tasks than herself:

"...This difficulty is further compounded by the fact that a considerable number of my peers are also participating in the national competition. Observing their effortless navigation of the questions, in contrast to my arduous efforts, exacerbates my sense of inadequacy and doubts about my abilities. The sheer rigor of the assessment is beyond what I am accustomed to, and I am struggling to adjust to this new academic environment. My current state of feeling overwhelmed has left me desiring the ability to adapt better to these new circumstances."

According to the data, Siti indicated that her immediate surroundings tend to evoke a sense of insecurity in her, thereby necessitating greater efforts on her part. Furthermore, Siti pointed out

that the surrounding environment poses a hindrance to her English language development due to the low level of education prevalent therein. The proclivity to discontinue learning within her environment exacerbates the challenge of locating a suitable learning environment.

Students' strategies to solve the problems in preparing English

Moreover, this study unveiled numerous discoveries regarding the strategies employed by students to surmount linguistic challenges encountered while preparing for the English literacy section of the SNBT. An illustrative case is Prince, who endeavors to overcome the language barrier by translating foreign words into Indonesian. In addition, he conscientiously draws upon the strategies he acquired during his academic pursuits in school and various courses.

"My approach to analyzing texts involves a thorough examination of the specific task or inquiry at hand. For instance, when tasked with identifying the main idea of a passage, I apply the techniques and strategies imparted to me by my instructor, such as scrutinizing the introductory and concluding sections of the paragraph..."

In addition, Prince provided an explanation that he enlisted the assistance of acquaintances whom he deemed proficient in the English language to aid him in his preparation for the SNBT examination. Furthermore, Prince elucidated that he actively sought assistance from individual within his network whom he deemed to possess a high degree of proficiency in the English language. His intention in doing so was to bolster his preparation for the SNBT examination. This strategic approach involved Prince's deliberate efforts to engage with individuals possessing superior linguistic skills, aiming to enhance his competence in addressing English literacy-related inquiries on the SNBT.

Furthermore, in order to mitigate his challenges with vocabulary, Prince has disclosed that he consistently employs a translation application and endeavors to expose himself to English music as a means of familiarizing himself with words and comprehending the definitions of complex vocabulary. This perspective aligns with Saluky and Marine, (2021) and Oktaviana et al., (2021), both of whom contend that the acquisition of proficiency in the English language can be facilitated through the utilization of technological tools, such as educational applications. In contrast, Yunanda et al., (2022) espouses a divergent stance,

advocating that reading remains the most effective method for addressing student's challenges, particularly in the realm of comprehending vocabulary. This is analogous to the approach taken by Siti, who employs both digital and print dictionaries to augment her lexicon. Additionally, she commits to memory the instructions imparted by her English teacher, encompassing techniques to identify central themes, word meaning, and principle of grammar:

"In order to address linguistic difficulties, particularly those related to word translation, I utilize a dictionary as a resource to identify challenging and unfamiliar vocabulary. During my study of English literature for the SNBT, I consistently keep a mobile device and dictionary at hand. Additionally, I carefully review the notes provided by my English teacher, which outline strategies for identifying main ideas within paragraphs, compiling vocabulary lists, and grasping fundamental grammar concepts. I find these materials to be exceedingly beneficial to my studies."

According to the research findings based on student interviews, it was observed that students often attempt to overcome and avoid psychological issues by adopting a positive thinking approach towards their challenges. It is contrast to the research conducted by Mukminina and Abidin, (2020), wherein coping technique were identified as a prevalent approach employed to alleviate student panic when confronted with the challenges posed by SNBT. Notably, this finding diverge from Mukminina's research due to the significant influence of student's anxiety levels on the coping methods employed.

Siti argued that in order to maintain composure when dealing with difficult English questions, she endeavors to remain composed and refrain from impulsive behavior:

"I consistently maintain a positive self-perception and possess unwavering confidence in my ability to perform optimally and attain superior outcomes. My resolute determination compels me to continuously challenge myself and relentlessly endeavor towards achieving excellence in my SNBT English studies. My modus operandi entails preserving a composed and composed demeanor while undertaking academic tasks, eschewing any undue anxiety that may impede my performance. I attach great significance to allocating sufficient time and effort towards comprehending the subject matter thoroughly, as opposed to hastily

skimming through the material, only to forget it later."

Besides, Prince expounded on the notion that the responsibility of the mother's role in effectively addressing and resolving any psychological issues that he may facing:

"My mother has provided me with the inspiration to undertake this examination. Additionally, she consistently instills in me the importance of perseverance and resilience, which serves to further ignite my passion for continued learning, particularly in the realm of English literacy for SNBT."

Additionally, Prince expressed that during times of stress and insecurity, he would seek solace in confiding in his mother, thereby releasing the internal tension that he was experiencing. Subsequently, Prince reported experiencing a notable improvement in his emotional state.

According to research conducted with students preparing for the English literacy test, the use of technology is a prevalent strategy among them (Oktaviana et al., 2021; Saluky & Marine, 2021). These students rely on English learning apps to improve their English literacy skills. One noteworthy example is the use of Google Translate application, as reported by both Siti and Prince. They use this application to assist them in finding difficult vocabulary during English literacy exercises. This highlights the importance of technology in aiding language learning and test preparation:

"During my preparation for the SNBT exam, I utilized my smartphone extensively and heavily relied on technology. Specifically, I relied heavily on Google Translate for the translation of English words and phrases. I believe that Google Translate is an extremely useful tool as it facilitates the discovery of new vocabulary and their respect meaning with great ease..."

Furthermore, the utilizing of smartphone technology to participate in the SNBT Try Out Facilitated Prince and Siti in acquiring a better understanding of the inquiries they would encounter while tackling SNBT questions in the English literacy domain:

"On occasions, I search for information regarding tryouts and avail myself of online tryout activities to get ready for the SNBT. The online SNBT tryout was immense assistance to

me, particularly in acquiring a precise understanding of how to tackle English questions.”

In addition, according to the given information, Siti utilized online tryouts to determine the type of questions that she would encounter in the SNBT test. Siti contended that she had no prior knowledge of the questions that are usually asked in state university entrance test. Therefore, she utilized the English SNBT tryout questions to self-study at home.

Then, based on extant data, this study aims to investigate the primary challenges encountered by students in acquiring English literacy skill necessary for successful performance in the SNBT exam, as well as explore the development of effective learning strategies employed by students in preparation for the aforementioned examination.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research study examined the challenges encountered by high school students in Indonesia while acquiring English literacy skills for the SNBT examination. Language, psychological, and environmental challenges were identified as the primary obstacles. To overcome these challenges, students employed strategies such as translation, dictionary used, exposure to English music, positive thinking, allocating sufficient time for understanding, and utilizing technology-based resources. These findings emphasize the importance of addressing diverse learning needs, providing guidance on test format, and integrating technology in language curriculum to support students in their English literacy acquisition for SNBT test. The current study predominantly focused on comprehensively addressing the obstacles encountered by students during SNBT examinations in the context of English literacy questions. Consequently, there is a pressing need for further research with a more specific and in-depth research in the future, particularly in terms of elucidating the finer details and ramifications of these challenges.

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