

The Difficulties of English Students

Learning TOEFL

Novita Andini⁽¹⁾

novitandini@umnaw.ac.id

Annisa Maghfirah⁽²⁾

annisamaghfirah@umnaw.ac.id

Lela safitri⁽³⁾

lelasafitri@2umnaw.ac.id

Alvi rahmatika⁽⁴⁾

alvirahmatika@umnaw.ac.id

English Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education,
Universitas Muslim Nusantara Al Washliyah, Medan

Abstract

The aim of this research is to determine the difficulties of english students in studying toefl. The approach used in this research is descriptive qualitative with students from the university of north sumatra by conducting interviews as a data collection tool. The research results show that there are several main factors that make it difficult for students to study toefl, namely lack of time management, lack of practice, lack of mastery of Indonesian and English vocabulary and pronunciation.

Keywords: *English Students, Factors of Difficulty, Qualitative, TOEFL*

Abstrak

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menentukan kesulitan yang dialami oleh mahasiswa bahasa Inggris dalam mempelajari TOEFL. Pendekatan yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah deskriptif kualitatif dengan mahasiswa dari Universitas Sumatera Utara dengan melakukan wawancara sebagai alat pengumpulan data. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ada beberapa faktor utama yang membuat mahasiswa kesulitan dalam belajar TOEFL, yaitu kurangnya manajemen waktu, kurangnya latihan, kurangnya penguasaan kosakata dan penguasaan bahasa Indonesia dan Inggris.

Kata kunci: *Mahasiswa Bahasa Inggris, Faktor Kesulitan, Kualitatif, TOEFL*

1. Introduction

TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) is a paper and computer-based test that is currently the most popular international test in many countries. It was first administered by ETS (Educational Testing Service) in 1964. (Parni Rina, 2021). TOEFL test has grown rapidly and is widely used in higher education, including: Some aspects, such as introducing her TOEFL into the curriculum and using his TOEFL scores for university admission and degrees, help foreign learners understand the difficulty of answering tests and master English. requires more discussion. (Saiful Akmal, 2020)

Although English is used as a foreign language in Indonesia, it is not a second language (Yabie et al., 2021). Second language (SL) and foreign language (FL) have different usages. SL is commonly used by people and exists alongside the national language, whereas FL is not commonly used among the native speakers of the country. In other words, coexistence with the national language as an official language was never allowed. (Herman Herman, 2023)

The TOEFL is also accepted by some universities outside the United States as proof of English proficiency. TOEFL is actually a series of tests. The most popular of these exams are the TOEFL iBT and TOEFL Essentials exams. Other tests in the TOEFL suite include TOEFL ITP (Institutional Testing Program), TOEFL Junior, and TOEFL Primary. These other formats of his TOEFL are only available to students through their schools. TOEFL PBT (Paper Based Test or Paper-Delivered Test) was discontinued in April 2021.

The TOEFL consists of four sections: Reading, Listening, Speaking, and Writing. The TOEFL iBT is a long and demanding test (3 hours) designed to assess a student's readiness to study at an English-speaking university. Many students spend 3 to 6 months preparing for their TOEFL before taking the exam. The TOEFL Essentials exam was designed as a simpler, less expensive English test with less academic focus.

2. Literature Review

TOEFL stands for "Test of English as a Foreign Language" and is a test that tests the English language proficiency required for registration and admission to educational institutions. This test is very important for applicants or speakers whose native language is not English. This form of his TOEFL English test is required by nearly all universities in the United States and Canada as a university admission requirement for both bachelor's (S-1) and master's (S-2 or S-3) degree programs. It has been. Ismail and Wahyuni (2017) state that TOEFL test results are also used to assess the English proficiency of students who are planning to enroll in universities. Universities from a variety of countries, including Europe and Australia, have expressed interest in participating. Although TOEFL focuses on American English, TOEFL is now available and used in the workplace as one of the ladder mechanisms for promotion. There are two types of TOEFL tests that students most commonly take: computer-based tests and paper-based tests. Computer-based testing is a type of testing that uses computer media. The assessment scores for this model range from 216 to 677, and paper-based tests are tests that use paper as the exam medium. The evaluation results of this model vary between 450 and over 550 (Saifuddin et al. 2006). TOEFL test scores range from 310 (lowest) to 677 (highest) for PBT (paper-based test). These are some proficiency tests in United States. In the United States, the tests are Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), Michigan Test of Language Proficiency (MTELP), Comprehensive English Language Test (CELT), Ilyin oral interview test (IOI), Basic English skills test (B.E.S.T), Interagency Language Roundtable oral interview (ILR) to mention a few. In proficiency test, TOEFL test is one of standardized test that measure students' proficiency level in English. Standardized test consists of different types of imultiple-choice questions, given to a large number of people at the same time, graded by computer and timed. Besides, TOEFL is used in work as one of employer recruitment timechanism nowadays. (Hizbul Wathoni, 2022).

There are currently three types of election audits available. Although the information discussed on the exam is the same, the level of technology required to complete the exam is different. They are:

1. TOEFL PBT. PBT is an abbreviation for Paper Based Test. This is the most common way to take the TOEFL test. Most people do not take paper tests as the CBT and iBT formats are more secure and provide faster assessment results. The PBT TOEFL is used in some environments where computers are not available.
2. TOEFL CBT. CBT is an abbreviation for Computer Based Test. This is currently the recommended option as it allows him to record the TOEFL test as accurately as possible while removing unnecessary data. CBT TOEFL is a format that many international students encounter in different locations around the world.
3. IBT TOEFL. IBT is an abbreviation for Internet-Based Test. Since its inception in 2005, iBT TOEFL has overtaken CBT as the most popular method of taking the TOEFL test. The IBT format is the only TOEFL format that includes a speaking component. This is the main reason why it was tested.

TOEFL is preferred by U.S. educational institutions because it provides the most accurate assessment of an English student's conversational language proficiency. Aspects and Skills of the TOEFL Test Mafufah (2018) explains that the TOEFL test has several skills, namely: 1) Reading comprehension; Reading can be defined as the interaction between reader and text that contributes to automaticity and reading fluency. Reading is important in education because it can impart knowledge to students. To gain knowledge, students must go through a process of meaning construction. The process of meaning construction leads to understanding. Students can understand a text only if they understand the information contained in the text. Therefore, reading comprehension can be defined as understanding the written words and read content in a text (Febriani, 2019). 2) Listening comprehension. The listening section of the TOEFL is designed to measure your ability to understand spoken English. Contains listening passages and questions for each passage. The listening questions are divided into three parts: Part A, Part B, and Part C. Part A consists of 30 short conversations between two people, each ending with a question that must be answered using the correct answer choices (A, B, C, D).

This part of Part A consists of 30 questions. Part B consists of two long conversations between her and him, with each conversation followed by several questions. Part B typically consists of 7-8 questions. In some cases, C consists of his three long speeches (lectures), with only one of him involved (monologue). And every speech is followed by some questions (Gilakjani and Sabouri, 2019). Part C also consists of 7 to 11 questions. Each of these sections has instructions and directions for answering the questions, read aloud by a native speaker. The words spoken by native speakers in this direction are almost the same in any TOEFL test. Therefore, it is a good idea to already know the directions and be familiar with them before taking the TOEFL test. That way, when reading the directions, you can read as many answer choices as possible to guess what questions will be asked. is the answer option. This section or session will thoroughly test your listening skills. This section tests candidates' ability to listen to English speech or spoken English. Participants are expected to be able to clearly hear the conversation from the tape recorder or other media. The TOEFL test listening comprehension is always a nightmare for test takers and it is not uncommon for many participants to fail the test during this session. The time to answer individual listening comprehension questions is very short. Students have a maximum of 8 seconds per task. When it comes to listening questions, it is very important to read all the answer choices. 3) "Structure and Written Expression" is his second section of his TOEFL test that focuses on written English. This segment consists of two parts: (A): Structural and (B): Written and the test taker will be given 25 minutes to answer a total of 40 questions. (Muhajir, 2018). Part A contains 15 multiple-choice questions marked as part of the sentence completion, with possible answers A, B, C, and D. The second part, on the other hand, contains 25 questions.

In the second part, candidates encounter error analysis type questions in each set. In addition to ITP TOEFL, PBT TOEFL also has a structure and written expression. The difference between the two is that the PBT TOEFL has one section called the Test of Written English (also known as TWE). This section tests your knowledge of English grammar. Although structure and grammar are different, they are similar and related to each other. In their book, King and Stanley study the structure of English sentences to help people who are proficient in speaking and listening, but cannot become effective writers, score well on TOEFL structure and written expression. The Unlikely Points Out (Removed) SWE) contains passages that test candidates' knowledge of the key structural and grammatical elements of standard written English. The grammar section contains 40 questions. There are 1 to 15 questions related to structure (sentence completion), and 16 to 40 questions related to sentence expression (error analysis). Sentence completion is how the test taker finds and answers the best answer to complete the blank sentence. Error detection, on the other hand, asks test takers to look for errors and wrong parts of sentences (Astuti and Fitrawati, 2019).

3. Method

Creswell (2012) defines qualitative research as research to study human and social issues, where researchers base their findings on data view reports and analysis of data collected in the field. and will then be documented in a full research report. . As a result, the researchers adopted a qualitative case study research approach with a focus on exploratory case studies. However, the purpose of this study is to gain insight from the participants' perspective. The purpose of this study is to investigate students' difficulty in the TOEFL test.

This study was conducted at a private university in Medan. four people participated in this study. You are in the 7th semester of the English Education Research Program. Depending on the researcher's goals, the researcher will select at least four people who are willing to participate in this study. In addition to participant availability, researchers evaluated a number of important aspects of participant identification, including participant background. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with all participants to collect data information. The researchers then conducted individual interviews with participants at various points in time, taking into account each participant's time availability. The interview took about a month and a half. During the interviews, the researcher allowed the participants to freely express their opinions and use the language they preferred. Researchers will record the interviews digitally. After all the necessary data is collected, the researcher transcribes the data and writes it into text. The researcher will ask the participants to review the data to confirm its reliability. The next step after the interview is to analyze the data obtained from the participants. The researcher can then review the acquired data and discard anything that is unnecessary or not relevant to the researcher's answer. Researchers reduce and code unnecessary data. The researchers then categorize the data collected in this study into a number of themes and subthemes (Creswell, 2012).

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 Result

The results of this research were taken from interviews on December 16 2023. Based on the interview results, there were 4 main factors that caused participants to experience difficulties facing the TOEFL. The four factors are time management, lack of vocabulary mastery, different pronunciation from Indonesian.

1. Time management (time management) The first difficulty factor faced by students in solving TOEFL questions is the lack of students' ability to manage time. In other words, students cannot do the questions optimally with the time provided.
2. Lack of practice Lack of practice is the second cause why students experience difficulty in completing the TOEFL.
3. Lack of vocabulary mastery Lack of vocabulary mastery is the third difficulty factor in facing the TOEFL, especially in the reading and listening sections. This has been investigated by several researchers, one of whom is David (2016) with the title "*Investigating the Relationship between Vocabulary Knowledge and Academic Reading Performance*". "This research confirms the importance of vocabulary factors in facing the TOEFL." Based on interviews conducted, vocabulary is one of the factors of difficulty in solving TOEFL questions.
4. Pronunciation is different from Indonesian. Pronunciation in English is different from pronunciation in Indonesian, so this becomes a difficulty for test participants in answering TOEFL questions, especially the listening comprehension section.

4.2 Discussion

TOEFL is an English test used to measure the level of English language proficiency through listening, reading, writing and structural expression tests. The TOEFL test has reached the point where most universities in the country use this standardized test as part of their graduation requirements. TOEFL test results are also the basis for testing the English language skills of students applying to universities in other countries. The TOEFL test always begins with listening comprehension consisting of parts A, B and C, followed by structure and written expression consisting of parts A and B, and finally reading comprehension. It is generally believed that to achieve a high score in the TOEFL test, a student is expected to be able to answer questions in all three sections. In fact, many students, including English majors, still fail to reach the minimum TOEFL score. Many students still get scores below 400 points. Based on the results and discussion, students face many problems and difficulties in their TOEFL test. They focus on answering TOEFL questions, especially listening comprehension. TOEFL preparation and test would contribute to lower-order thinking and higher-order thinking skills (Baghei et al, 2020)

5. Conclusion

Students experience difficulties not only in listening, but also in reading comprehension, composition, and writing. One of the main reasons is that students do not have sufficient vocabulary and do not practice their English skills. There are 4 main factors that cause students majoring in English Language Education to experience difficulties in completing the TOEFL. These difficulty factors are time management, lack of practice, lack of mastery of vocabulary, and differences in English and Indonesian pronunciation. Therefore, if a student understands and understands the instructions well before taking the TOEFL test, then when reading the instructions, read as many answer choices as possible and guess which question relates to that answer choice. It is highly desirable to be able to do so. This section tests the candidate's ability to listen to English speech or spoken English. As a result, listening to the TOEFL test is always a problem for test takers, and it is not uncommon for many students to fail the test in that session. In addition to written expression, reading comprehension and composition skills are also of interest. In other words, to overcome these difficulties during the TOEFL test, students or test takers need to practice a lot. You should exercise more before the TOEFL test. Of course, achieving a high score on the TOEFL test requires effort. The more carefully and seriously a student takes the TOEFL test, the fewer mistakes they make. The harder a student studies, the higher his TOEFL score. Effort always pays off, so don't be disbelieving. Especially for the TOEFL test, students need to stay motivated to try their best.

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