

The Obstacles Faced by Indonesian TOEFL Test Takers

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Abstract

The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is an exam that determines whether a student whose native language is not English has strong enough English skills to succeed incourses at a college or university in the United States or Canada (S. Kim, 2021; Smart, 2019). This study aims to analyze test taker's obstacles in TOEFL by Indonesian and specifcily the researcher analyzes it with a English lecturer in University of Muslim Nusantara Al Washliyah, Medan. It is through answering the questionnare based on someone's expertised. This research approach is qualitative method and a narrative approach with asking for five questions. Interviewis done through via message as collecting data. The questions are Why do you need to study about TOEFL?, What do you have any obstacles during studying TOEFL?, After studying TOEFL, what are your wishes?, What is your motivation for studying TOEFL?, How long you study about TOEFL?. Based on the questions that is aksed by researchers, researchers hope that it is going tobe as reflection for someone who wants to join up in TOEFL.

Keywords: English Skills, Test Takers, TOEFL, Analysis

Abstrak

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) adalah ujian yang menentukan apakah seorang siswa yang bahasa ibunya bukan bahasa Inggris memiliki kemampuan bahasa Inggris yang cukup kuat untuk berhasil dalam kursus di perguruan tinggi atau universitas di Amerika Serikat atau Kanada (S. Kim, 2021; Cerdas, 2019). Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis hambatan peserta tes TOEFL oleh orang Indonesia dan secara khusus peneliti menganalisisnya dengan dosen Bahasa Inggris di Universitas Muslim Nusantara Al Washliyah, Medan. Caranya dengan menjawab kuisioner berdasarkan keahlian seseorang. Pendekatan penelitian ini adalah metode kualitatif dan pendekatan naratif dengan mengajukan lima pertanyaan. Wawancara dilakukan melalui pesan sebagai pengumpulan data. Pertanyaannya adalah Mengapa perlu belajar TOEFL?, Apa kendala yang anda alami selama belajar TOEFL?, Setelah belajar TOEFL, apa keinginan anda?, Apa motivasi anda belajar TOEFL?, Berapa lama anda belajar TOEFL? . Berdasarkan pertanyaan-pertanyaan yang diajukan peneliti, peneliti berharap dapat menjadibahkan refleksi bagi seseorang yang ingin mengikuti TOEFL.

Kata kunci: Keterampilan Bahasa Inggris, Peserta Ujian, TOEFL, Analisis

1. Introduction

The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is an exam that determines whether a student whose native language is not English has strong enough English skills to succeed in courses at a college or university in the United States or Canada (S. Kim, 2021; Smart, 2019). According to Warfield et al., (2013) argue that TOEFL is sometimes used as an indicator of students' academic success and how well their performance is, during their study in the university. In Indonesia, TOEFL is used by most universities as a tool to measure students' English proficiency level and also as one of the graduation requirements. Every university has its own requirements which need to be fulfilled by the students before they finish their study. In the era of globalization, communication in English is very necessary. This is completely understandable because Indonesian people are required to get it compete with the people of other countries in all aspects of life. They were sued to be able to communicate in international forums using language English as the language of instruction. This is in line with the opinion of Alhadi (2020) who said that "English has a big role in education, especially at higher levels of education. Even though TOEFL is used by universities and corporations a lot to get trusting of you if you have several skills in English. One of its functions is to assess task performers' English proficiency for academic purposes. This type of test is becoming more popular in non-English speaking countries, partly because task performers need it to apply for scholarships or continue studying abroad (Mukminatien, 2015). More than that, TOEFL can be used as a requirement for university admission (e.g., applying for a doctoral degree program in English Language Teaching) and for career promotion and teacher or lecturer's certification, like in Indonesia. Thus, Indonesian foreign language task performers need strategies in completing this kind of test.

To fill the gap, the present study inquire TOEFL is the right way to test someone's skills in English, it is a part of parameter or tool when someone wants to explore their studies such as undergraduate, postgraduate, or looking for a job in the others countries.

2. Literature Review

TOEFL stands for Test of English as a Foreign Language that a test to determine someone's proficiency in English. It is usually done as a pre-requisite to entry to campuses in United States or other countries in the world or also as a prerequisite for entering a world-class company. Usually, this test takes about three hours and vis conducted in 4 parts, namely: listening comprehension, grammar structure and written expression, reading comprehension, and writing section. According to Norris (2018) the TOEFL test was developed in the early 1960s were useful in assessing English as a second language skills speakers who wish to study at institutions where English is the language language of instruction. TOEFL test is responsible below auspices of Testing English as a Foreign Language, a working group formed through the collaborative efforts of more than thirty people public and private institutions concerned with English language proficiency second language speakers, especially those using English-medium academic institutions.

The TOEFL test consists of three sections, according pracento 2015 that :

- 1) listening comprehension, measures the ability to understand English as it is spoken in North America. Oral characteristics of language is emphasized, and questions are tested includes vocabulary and idiomatic expressions as well as a special frequently used grammatical construction in spoken English. Material and verbal stimuli questions are recorded in North American standards English; response options are printed in test book.
- 2) Structure and Written Expression, measures recognition of selected structural and grammatical points in standard written English. That the language tested is formal, not conversational. The topic of the sentence is general academic in nature so that individuals in certain fields studies or from a particular national or linguistic group has no particular advantages.
- 3) Reading Comprehension, measures the ability to read and understand short passagessimilar in topic and style to the student may be encountered in North American colleges and universities university. The examiner reads various short passages on academic subjects and answer some questions about each section. The question tests information stated in or implied by the section, as well knowledge of some specific words as they are used in that section.

2.2 TOEFL Test Preparation

According to Powers (2012), this kind of specialized preparation is generally considered desirable, as it allows individuals to master the mechanics of test-taking, thereby freeing them to focus on, and accurately demonstrate, the skills and abilities they are dealing with. assessed. According to Mousavi, Arizavi, and Namdari (2014), they argue that test developers, researchers, teachers, and students/test takers always pay attention to the issue of the influence of test preparation on students' TOEFL test performance. The impact of special preparation on test validity is a relevant consideration. Although the assumption is sometimes made that preparation can only falsify construct validity and undermine the predictive power of a test, some types of special preparation, by reducing irrelevant sources of test difficulty, can actually increase construct validity and predictive validity (Farnsworth, 2013; Hayes & Read , 2004).

Based on research results from Winny and Elsa 2018, it is stated that the TOEFL se preparation program will be beneficial for low proficiency levels of students who want to take the TOEFL test because this kind of program is able to help them achieve the target score. Based on research results from (C. I. R. Fajri, U. Kasim, & S.S. Fitriani: 2021) there are several major obstacles faced in this environment three parts of the TOEFL test. First, their obstacles in listening comprehension section especially in long answers conversational questions and avoid similar sounds. Their solution is out by listening to English songs and watching English movies to familiarize yourself with the pronunciation, similar sounds and dialect. They will repeatedly use these strategies combined every day practice using TOEFL test books and online TOEFL tests to overcome them constraints on structure and written expression. Besides that, they also use dictionaries when reading English magazines, English newspapers, and modules as supporting media to help them for the reading comprehension section. Dictionaries help find out and understand the meaning of the verse. Read Newspapers and magazines help them understand the context reading texts because these texts generally discuss general topics like that such as astronomy, biology and history. Finally, their efforts at learning themselves and attending TOEFL training classes gave them ideas about their own obstacles. As a result, they will be able to choose and be creative the right solution for every obstacle in every part of TOEFLtest.

Harmer (2001) elaborates some important things which have to be had and done by English learners to be a good learner. A good English learner should have (Harmer, 2001):

- 4) Habits which will help students individually or correlatively

Students need to have good habits in increasing their study achievement.

- 5) Students' motivation

Desire to learn English will give big effect to the study result of the students. Harmer (2001) states that the students who are more highly motivated will learn more successfully than those who are only learning language as a means to an end(for example getting better job).

1. Good characteristics learning in classroom

A good learner posse some or all of the following characteristics such as a willingness to listen, a willingness to experiment, a willingness to ask questions, awillingness to think about how to learn and a willingness to accept corrections.

Jacobs and Hyman stated that some successful college students can be generated by students; intelligence, insight and sheer good luck, but a lot of time- unbeknownst to some students that their successful academic can be caused by their study habits. Jacobs and Hyman state study habits of the most successful college students, they are (Jacobs, 2009):

- 1) Good in self-management and time management

- 2) One of characteristics of good learning habit of students is good in managing.

- 3) Having good planning

- 4) Students who have a good learning habit will have a plan ahead for what to do (make list to do), they also divide up the task and prepare for test.

- 5) Being Persistent and Brave

- 6) Good learning habits of successful students are challenging themselves to be better and challenging themselves in trying new things which are good for their study.

- 7) Focusing on their Study

- 8) Lynn (2009) in his finding states that successful students have some habits which focus on be the best or number one in their study.

- 9) Learning from experience and proof

- 10) The other good learning habit which done by students are they learn from the experience and engage the proof in their learning activities.

There are other some effective learning habits which are done by learners' basedon students academic resource centre, the University of Central Florida:

- a. Style of Study

Every student has different style of study. That style of study can be mentioned as an effective study habit if it can give more positive effect for the students especially for their achievement.

- b. Reading

Students with effective study habit in reading will do some activities such as making summary before they start reading by looking information or browsing information of the book, etc.

- c. Taking notes

Students who have effective study habit know and understand that having complete note will give more advantage to them. Thus, the students will take note as they read text books, take note during the class, rewrite their note, etc.

d. Memorizing

Study during their personal peak time of energy to increase concentration. The students quiz themselves; say difficult concepts out to loud in order understand them better.

e. Time Management

Students use a calendar book to write down upcoming academic and personal activities. They use to do list, start studying at least several days before quizzes or tests. They finish their papers, homework or project as soon as they are assigned.

3. Method

This research is using qualitative method and a narrative case study inquiring of the test taker's obstacles reflections on his experienced and how he is connected with his beliefs about TOEFL Preparation. To comprehend the data structured in this case study, a narrative approach is adopted because the relateness of someone's life stories. This research program is a required in English Education Department in University of Muslim Nusantara Al Washliyah, Medan. The researchers arrange the data through via message on WhatsApp application, they use it because it is flexible to manage the time. The interviewee is a lecturer in the laboratory language, he focusses on listening skills there. He has been studying TOEFL since 2008 and the last time he gets 500 TOEFL score. The reserchers gain the data from via message and in deep talking about his expertised in TOEFL. The researchers ask several question such as Why do you need to study about TOEFL? What do you have any obstacles during studying TOEFL?, After studying TOEFL, what are your wishes?, What is your motivation for studying TOEFL?, How long you study about TOEFL?. Thus, they are going to be replied by interviewee.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 Result

The result of the obstacles faced by Indonesian test taker will demonstrate in the table below so it is going to be clear.

Table 1. The Obstacles Faced in TOEFL Indonesian Test Taker

Aspects	Explanations	Aspects	Explanations
Language Barriers	Complex English passages, academic vocabulary and grammar structures	Language Barriers	Complex English passages, academic vocabulary and grammar structures
Time Management			Allocated time to complete the questions
Test Anxiety			Concentrating, forgetfulness, or a decrease
Speaking and Writing Fluency			Generating ideas quickly or organizing structured
Listening Skills			Academic contexts. Accents, fast speech, and complex content
Limited Exposure to Academic English			To comprehend the vocabulary and concepts presented in reading and listening
Lack of Preparation			Not allocate enough time for preparation
Speaking Confidence			Impact pronunciation, fluency, and the ability to articulate ideas coherently

1) Language Barriers

For non-native English speakers like him, language barriers can be a significant obstacle. Understanding complex English passages, academic vocabulary, and nuanced grammar structures may be challenging

2) Time Management

The TOEFL is a timed test, and managing time effectively during each section can be difficult. Interviewee struggles to complete all the questions within the allocated time, which can impact my scores.

3) Test Anxiety

Interviewee experienced test anxiety, which can affect performance on the day of the exam. Anxiety may lead

to difficulty concentrating, forgetfulness, or a decrease in overall performance

4) Speaking and Writing Fluency

The speaking and writing sections of the TOEFL require me to express his ideas clearly and coherently. Interviewee struggles with generating ideas quickly or organizing their thoughts in a structured manner.

5) Listening Skills

The listening section of the TOEFL involves understanding spoken English in academic contexts. Accents, fast speech, and complex content can pose challenges for him.

6) Limited Exposure to Academic English

Interviewee who has not been exposed to academic English may find it difficult to comprehend the vocabulary and concepts presented in the reading and listening sections

7) Lack of Preparation

Adequate preparation is crucial for success on the TOEFL. Interviewee may not allocate enough time for preparation or may not be aware of the specific format and requirements of the test.

8) Speaking Confidence

Speaking in a foreign language, especially in an exam setting, can be intimidating. Lack of confidence may impact pronunciation, fluency, and the ability to articulate ideas coherently.

4.2 Discussion

TOEFL test needs a complete preparation in order to result the expected scores. All the answer can not be memorized respectively, yet test takers have the chance to set up the strategy to understand the keywords to find out the best answers. It is in line with a study reported by Bagheli (2020) listening section in TOEFL test cover analysis skills, namely;

5. Conclusion

TOEFL stands for Test of English as a Foreign Language that a test to determine someone's proficiency in English. It is usually done as a pre-requisite to entry to campuses in United States or other countries in the world or also as a prerequisite for entering a world-class company. Usually, this test takes about three hours and is conducted in 4 parts, namely: listening comprehension, grammar structure and written expression, reading comprehension, and writing section. Lots of people have problems taking the TOEFL test, for example beginners. They experience many obstacles or problems in facing the TOEFL test. There are obstacles such as language barriers, time management, anxiety test, speaking and writing fluency, listening skills, limited exposure to academic English, lack of preparation and speaking confidence. It is hoped that no matter what problems they experience, there will be a best solution or strategy for them when they are experiencing these problems. One solution that can be put forward is to prepare ourselves when we want to take a TOEFL class or test. We must also be able to organize all our activities so that outset preparation will be optimal.

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