

ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY THROUGH THE TOEFL TEST TAKEN BY UMNAW POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS

Yugi Diraga Prawiyata¹, Ulian Barus²

Universitas Muslim Nusantara Al Washliyah, Medan, Indonesia

yugidiraga@umnaw.ac.id

Received: 26/08/2022

Accepted: 20/09/2022

Publication: 01/12/2022

Abstract

The purpose of this research was to find out how the English proficiency of UMNAW postgraduate students was measured with the TOEFL test consisted of three main sections; Listening Comprehension, Structure and Written Expression, and Reading Comprehension. The researcher used a descriptive qualitative research design in which the researcher described and analyzed students' English proficiency based on the TOEFL test. The fourth-year postgraduate students of the Indonesian Language Education Study Program in the Academic Year 2021/2022 total of 10 people the population of the research. Based on the research findings, it can be classified that in Listening Comprehension Section one student got the highest score 28 and one students got the lowest score of 18. In the Structure and Written Expression Section, one student got the highest score 24 and one student got the lowest score of 15. In Reading Comprehension Section, one student got the highest score 28 and one student got the lowest score of 19. After being converted, one student got the highest score 453 and one student got the lowest score 440. Furthermore, it can be classified that UMNAW postgraduate students taking the TOEFL test are at a Low Intermediate level. This research is then expected to be a reference for further research and can be more perfectly developed.

Keywords – English proficiency, postgraduate students, TOEFL test

Introduction

TOEFL or known as the Test of English as a Foreign Language is an English test used to measure a person's level of English mastery through listening, writing and structure expression, and reading test. TOEFL is a type of standardized test to test a person's English skills as an absolute requirement to continue education to a higher level in almost all universities in the world, including in Indonesia (Sukur, 2013). In Indonesia, the use of TOEFL as an English proficiency test is quite wide, from simply to find out a person's strength in English language mastery to important goals such as entering educational programs and applying for jobs (Utomo & Damayanti, 2019).

The implementation of measurement of English proficiency for new students is an important step that needs to be taken by every university in Indonesia (Sugeng, Saleh, & Suharto, 2012). To measure a person's language proficiency, a language test device called the language proficiency test is used. One of the most widely used English proficiency tests in the world is the TOEFL.

In addition, campus often invites guest lecturers or foreign speakers, in an international seminar where they will certainly use English as the first language. Even some campuses issue a standard policy of English proficiency for students who will carry out green table exams, thesis exams and dissertation exams with requirements through the TOEFL test. This test is fantastic technique to assist students who will need a high TOEFL score for the upcoming study (Putra, Lubis, & Siregar, 2020). Additionally, non-native students use it to obtain scholarships to

English-speaking countries (Sudrajat & Astuti, 2018). It is also added that TOEFL is required while applying for a job (Samad, Jannah, & Fitriani, 2017).

TOEFL is an English placement test that tests your listening, structure and written expression, reading comprehension in English. It stands for Test of English as a Foreign Language and is issued by the US agency, ETS (Educational Testing Service). The TOEFL exam is currently offered in two formats at test counters around the world; Paper-based TOEFL (PBT) and his Internet-based TOEFL (IBT). Both formats test similar language skills, but in different ways (Sharpe, 2011). TOEFL is a practical exam used to look at a person's level of English proficiency without being directly associated with the teaching and learning process. TOEFL is one of the most direct goals for many people, without the necessary score, they cannot continue their professional studies or obtain certifications to practice (Sharpe, 2011).

This means that the TOEFL test is a prerequisite test needed for those who want to continue their education to a higher level. It also can be different from achievement tests or tests whose scope is limited only to the lessons learned by students in an English class.

Literature Review

Understanding of TOEFL

The TOEFL test is a test that measures the English proficiency of non-native speakers (Phillips, 2001). This is especially required through English-speaking campuses or universities. Additionally, institutions, including government agencies, businesses, and scholarship programs, may also require this test.

To have a good TOEFL score, one needs more knowledge of English and the right strategies in taking the test (Nurhayati, 2016). These strategies can be used to make it easier for students to answer exams. Each part of the test has a different strategy to use. For example, in the listening section, the test taker must look forward to the next question in the paper- and pencil-based test, listen carefully, read and think about the answer options and answer each question before the next question begins.

The TOEFL test is now offered in both paper and computer formats. The TOEFL test is a standardized English test (Phillips, 2001). Therefore, to do well on this test, you should improve your scores in the following area; you must strive to improve your English skills, listening comprehension, structure and writing, and reading knowledge covered by the TOEFL test.

Types of TOEFL

The TOEFL tests language skills in both academic and professional contexts (Fitria, 2021). These fields are bundled and divided into sections. TOEFL has four tests of English reading, listening, and logic skills: listening, structure and writing, and reading.

There are three types of TOEFL tests: the International TOEFL test, the Institutional TOEFL test, and the TOEFL Like (KampusYuk, 2020). What distinguishes the three types of tests is that the questions given in the International TOEFL is always new with every test. Meanwhile, the institutional TOEFL Test and TOEFL Like Test are generally a matter of the International TOEFL test that has been tested in the past years.

It mentioned three forms of the TOEFL test, namely: Paper Based Test (PBT) TOEFL, Computer Based Test (CBT) TOEFL, and Internet Based Test (iBT) (KampusYuk, 2020). From those three test formats above, TOEFL PBT is used in this research.

The Benefit of Taking the TOEFL Test

By definition, TOEFL is a benchmark for knowing a person's English skills. Usually, TOEFL is used as one of the requirements when you want to study or work abroad. Not only as

a requirement, but has TOEFL also actually had many benefits, starting from improving English skills, getting more opportunities, and much more.

Taking the TOEFL exam has six benefits (EnglishProficiency.com, 2022). First, TOEFL is a wonderful test because it is so comprehensive. This allows you to prove your knowledge of the English language at some point to admissions officers and prospective employers. Our unbiased assessment system gives you peace of mind that your English skills are being assessed accurately. Second, with the TOEFL in your hand, the campuses and prospective employers of your choice will recognize and accept your results as proof of your English proficiency. Third, your improved English skills will be reflected in your TOEFL score, but new English skills will also have a positive impact on other areas of your life. Fourth, Preparing for the TOEFL allows you to face some aspects of college life that you may not be able to achieve. Constantly adding new words and terms to your vocabulary will help you feel more comfortable in an academic environment. Fifth, Taking the TOEFL soon is a good motivation. Having a clear goal in mind can help you manage your time more effectively and stay focused. Sixth, whether you're applying for a new job or not, it's always a good idea to include your TOEFL scores on your resume.

Therefore, if you need to take an English test, TOEFL is for you. Your TOEFL score opens up many possibilities by determining the objective assessment, a widely-accepted certificate, improved English skills, motivation to study more and improved resume.

Research Method

In this research, descriptive research was used as the research method since descriptive research is the right choice when the purpose of the study is to identify characteristics, frequencies, trends, and categories. This is useful when not much is known about the topic or problem yet. Before you can research why something happened, you need to understand how, when, and where it happened (McCombes, 2022). It can be used to gather deep insights into a problem or generate new ideas for research (Bhandari, 2022). Then, descriptive research is chosen because it presents data systematically, factually, and accurately regarding the facts in the field.

Because the researcher is the instrument, thus, everything is controlled by researcher himself. One variable is then used in this research and a suitable approach is to use the quantitative method. Quantitative descriptive method is a quantitative research that takes the form of description with numbers or numeric (Salmaa, 2021). It means that the research has to do with the elaboration of statistical figures.

It attempts to collect quantifiable information for statistical analysis of the population sample of English proficiency through the TOEFL test taken by UMNAW postgraduate students. Then, the data from this research is the result of the English proficiency of UMNAW postgraduate students. While as a data source are fourth-year postgraduate students of the Indonesian Language Education Study Program in Academic Year 2021/2022 totaling 10 people.

The process of data analysis can be done in several stages such as data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion withdrawal. In other words, researchers use conversion systems to collect data. This means that each correct answer has a specific value. For example, if one correct answer is worth 20, two correct answers are worth 21, three correct answers are worth 23, and so on.

The correct answer value can be seen in the conversion table, after all those values in each section have been found, the sum can be for 3 (three), multiplied by 10 (ten), and finally can be obtained a score between 220 (lowest score) to 677 (highest score). That is the TOEFL score.

The first step is to address the responses that have been acquired and compute the number of right answers, then match the values in the conversion table, for example, such as there are 32 correct answers in Listening Comprehension, 35 correct answers in the Structure

and Written expression section, and 40 correct answers in the Reading Comprehension section. Then, match all those numbers in the conversion table.

Table 1: Example of Scoring TOEFL

Info	Listening	Structure	Reading
Correct Answer	32	35	40
Converted Score	52	60	55

(GoKampus, 2021)

Next, calculate the conversion value in the following ways. First, add all three converted values = $52+60+55 = 167$ (converted). Second, divide the number of values by 3 (three) = $167:3 = 55,6$. Third, multiply the result by 10 (ten) = $55,6 \times 10 = 556$. From the steps elaborated, the final TOEFL score of 556 can then be classified into the “Advance” level.

Then, TOEFL applies English proficiency in score level classification. In general, we know three levels of foreign language mastery, namely Elementary Level, Intermediate Level, and Advanced Level. For TOEFL scores, linguists usually group these scores into the following four levels; advance, high intermediate, low intermediate, and elementary (Carson, Carrell, Silberstein, Kroll, & Kuehn, 1990).

Table 2: TOEFL Score Level Classification

Score	Level Classification
525-677	Advance (A)
480-520	High Intermediate (HI)
420-480	Low Intermediate (LI)
310-420	Elementary (E)

Results and Discussion

The research data is in the form of the final TOEFL test score of UMNAW postgraduate students based on three assessment categories, namely Listening Comprehension, Structure and Written Expression, and Reading Comprehension are both yet and have been converted which are then classified.

Table 3: Correct Number of TOEFL Tests of Postgraduate Students

No	Initial	Correct Number		
		Listening	Structure	Reading
1	SNY	24	22	19
2	RI	18	24	21
3	RII	20	19	28
4	ENS	28	18	25
5	A	27	19	22
6	AS	24	18	25
7	TAA	24	22	20
8	M	24	20	21
9	SHN	27	15	25
10	ASL	25	17	23

Based on the table above, several conclusions can be drawn. First, in the Listening Section, one student got highest score 28, two students got score 27, one student got score 25, 4 students got score of 24, and two other students got each score 20 and 18. Second, In Structure Section, one student got the highest score 24, two students got score 22, one student got score 20, two students got score 19, two students got score 18, and two other students got each score 17 and 15. Third, in Reading Section, one student got the highest score 28, three students got score 25, one student got score 23, one student got score 22, two students got score 21, and two other students got each score 20 and 19.

Table 4: TOEFL Converted Score of Postgraduate Students

No	Initial	Converted Score			Total Score
		Listening	Structure	Reading	
1	SNY	47	46	39	440
2	RI	43	48	41	440
3	RII	45	44	46	450
4	ENS	49	43	44	453
5	A	49	44	42	450
6	AS	47	43	44	446
7	TAA	47	46	40	443
8	M	47	44	41	440
9	SHN	49	40	44	443
10	ASL	48	41	43	440

After being converted, TOEFL total score of postgraduate students can be drawn. One student got the highest score 453, two students got score 450, one student got score 446, two students got score 443, and four students got the lowest score 440. Furthermore, TOEFL scores that have been converted are classified into the following table:

Table 5: TOEFL Score Level Classification of Postgraduate Students

No	Initial	Score	Level
1	SNY	440	LI
2	RI	440	LI
3	RII	450	LI
4	ENS	453	LI
5	A	450	LI
6	AS	446	LI
7	TAA	443	LI
8	M	440	LI
9	SHN	443	LI
10	ASL	440	LI

From the table above, it can be classified that all UMNAW postgraduate students taken the TOEFL test are at Low Intermediate level. It can be seen from their score range around 420-480.

Conclusion

Based on research findings and discussion presented in the previous part, several conclusions can be drawn. First, in the Listening Section, one student got the highest score 28, two students got score 27, 4 students got score of 24, one student got score 25, and two other students got each score 18 and 20. Second, In Structure Section, one student got the highest score 24, two students got score 22, one student got score 20, two students got score 19, two students got score 18, and two other students got each score 15 and 17. Third, in Reading Section, one student got the highest score 28, three students got score 25, one student got score 23, one student got score 22, two students got score 21, and two other students got each score 19 and 20. Fourth, after being converted, one students got the highest score 453, two students got score 450, one student got score 446, two students got score 443, and four students got the lowest score 440. Furthermore, it can be classified that UMNAW postgraduate students taking the TOEFL test are at Low Intermediate level. In addition, the students should provide

themselves with information related to strategies in answering TOEFL test by joining workshop or TOEFL preparation class to increase their score.

References

- Bhandari, P. (2022). *What is qualitative research?; methods & examples*. Retrieved from Scribbr: <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/qualitative-research/>
- Carson, J. E., Carrell, P. L., Silberstein, S., Kroll, B., & Kuehn, P. A. (1990). Reading-writing relationships in first and second language. *TESOL Quarterly*, 4(22), 245-266.
- EnglishProficiency.com. (2022). *Top benefits of taking the TOEFL test*. Retrieved 2022, from EnglishProficiency.com: <https://englishproficiency.com/blog/benefits-of-taking-toefl/>
- Fitria, T. N. (2021). An analysis of the students' difficulties in TOEFL prediction test of listening section. *ENGLISHFRANCA: Academic Journal of English Language and Education*, 5(1), 95-110.
- GoKampus. (2021). *Pelajari cara menghitung scoring TOEFL yuk!* Retrieved from GoKampus: <https://www.gokampus.com/blog/wajib-tahu-5-trik-buat-dapetin-skor-toefl-tinggi>
- Izzan, A. (2016). *Metodologi pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris*. Bandung: Humaniora.
- KampusYuk. (2020). *Mengenal seluk beluk tes TOEFL*. Retrieved from KampusYuk: <https://kampusyuk.com/artikel/mengenal-seluk-beluk-tes-toefl-67>
- McCombes, S. (2022). *Descriptive research: definition, types, methods & examples*. Retrieved from Scribbr: <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/descriptive-research/>
- Naisbitt, J., & Abdurdene, P. (1990). *Megatrends 2000*. Jakarta: Binarupa Aksara.
- Nurhayati, N. (2016). An analysis of students' strategies in answering toefl. *Journal of English Language Studies*, 1(1), 10-18.
- Phillips, D. (2001). *Longman complete course for the TOEFL test*. New York: Longman.
- Putra, A., Lubis, R. F., & Siregar, S. R. (2020). An analysis on English students' difficulties in TOEFL test of structure and written expression section at IAIN Padangsidimpuan. *International Online Conference on English and Education*, 1, pp. 1-19. Padangsidimpuan.
- Salmaa. (2021). *Penelitian deskriptif: pengertian, kriteria, metode, dan contoh*. Retrieved from deepublish: <https://penerbitdeepublish.com/penelitian-deskriptif/>
- Samad, I. A., Jannah, M., & Fitriani, S. S. (2017). EFL students' strategies dealing with common difficulties in TOEFL reading comprehension section. *International Journal of Language Education*, 1(1), 29-36.
- Sharpe, P. J. (2011). *Barron's practice exercise for the TOEFL*. USA: Barron's Educational Series, Inc.
- Sinha, K. K. (2022). Role of modern technology in teaching and Learning the English language in Indian educational institutions. *Indonesian Journal of English Language Studies*, 8(2), 19-30.
- Sudrajat, W. N., & Astuti, E. R. (2018). Students' perceptions of the use of TOEFL. *HUMANIORA*, 9(3), 275-282.
- Sugeng, B., Saleh, S. M., & Suharto, G. (2012). Penguasaan bahasa inggris mahasiswa baru UNY tahun akademik 2005/2006 – 2009/2010 pada kriteria toefl-like. *Litera: Jurnal Penelitian Bahasa, Sastra, dan Pengajarannya*, 11(2), 189-203.
- Sukur, S. G. (2013). *Magic trick toefl ITP: Magic trick menyelesaikan soal-soal toefl ITP ala sang pakar*. Yogyakarta: Kalarana Press.
- Utomo, A., & Damayanti, P. (2019). Bentuk tes toefl untuk mahasiswa universitas kaltara: Studi kualitatif. *Jurnal Penelitian Humaniora*, 20(2), 59-66.