

The Drawbacks of Insufficient English Grammar Skills For The TOEFL Proficiency Test

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Abstrak

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui pentingnya atau bahkan seberapa penting penguasaan keterampilan tata bahasa Inggris bagi siapa pun terutama siswa yang ingin mempersiapkan diri untuk tes kemahiran TOEFL. Dalam hal ini, peneliti juga melakukan survei terhadap siswa secara acak di kelas persiapan TOEFL untuk mengetahui kemampuan dan kemajuannya. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini kemudian menggunakan uji hasil sampel dari perbedaan kemampuan siswa yang telah mengikuti TOEFL pretest dan Post-test menggunakan uji normalitas dan homogenitas secara statistik.

Hasilnya, terlihat bahwa lebih dari 45% hasil pretest siswa menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar dari mereka yang kemampuannya di bawah rata-rata tidak dapat mengikuti tes dengan baik karena kemampuan tata bahasa yang kurang. Sementara itu, para siswa yang mengikuti post-test setelah kelas persiapan menunjukkan bahwa mereka mendapatkan peningkatan yang signifikan dalam keterampilan tata bahasa mereka karena mereka memiliki pengetahuan dan pengalaman yang cukup tentang keterampilan bahasa yang penting dan strategi pengambilan tes yang diajarkan dan dikuasai. Oleh karena itu, hasil pretest dan post-test jelas menunjukkan bahwa siswa perlu mempersiapkan diri dengan baik sebelum mengikuti tes kemahiran TOEFL untuk memperoleh nilai yang baik sesuai target. Selain itu, untuk meningkatkan pengetahuan siswa dengan melatih semua keterampilan akademik bahasa Inggris seperti membaca, menulis, mendengarkan dan berbicara secara teratur.

Kata kunci : *Tes kemampuan TOEFL, Penguasaan Tata Bahasa, Hambatan*

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is crucial thing in assessing our capability in English. The lack of knowledge in TOEFL will guide to difficulty to answer the questions which brings aborammr is one of the most difficult abilities to acquire and learners should spend lots of time to enhance their grammar skill. Grammar is an important factor of conducting TOEFL test and it gives a significant effect on considering the best answer.

Apparently, language test is believed a valuable sources of information about the effectiveness of learning and teaching. (Brown 2003), Meanwhile, A test is a method of measuring a person's ability, knowledge, or performance in a given domain. (Aprianto and Heaerazi, 2019). Contrary to the fact, most of students do not bother much to the importance of grammar because they consider that the grammar is more complex than other English aspect. Learning grammar needs a lot of effort and time particularly when the international students learn English as a test. Grammar is a part of language aspects that on average

everyone is reluctant to learn, as it becomes a complex language. Obviously, grammar is the most difficult to be learned in language aspects. There are some factors that English grammar is hard to learn, namely: complex rules and almost all of them have exceptions, no particular logic and must be learned

as well as lack of motivation (Desheng and Vergese 2013).

Nevertheless, Grammar must be learned and it is an important part of communication that has a key role in communicative language teaching. Similar to it, Grammar is a crucial aspect of TOEFL and it gives a significant effect on determining the higher score (Dewi & Ahmad, 2021). The opinion that sentence structure can lead to misunderstandings in EFL communication are the reason why teaching grammar is so important. In fact. grammar capacity is not handy to be extended in lots of schools due to the fact English is a foreign language. Most students and learners pick the use of their mother tongue inside the school than using English language, particularly the writing. On the other hand, there are several grammar rules that most of English learners find tricky to remember and use correctly. but what grammar rules must be acknowledged well for the TOEFL test takers, however, they need to completely practice with examples for each rule so they can test their knowledge. By obtaining the best methods and resources to use for TOEFL grammar practice. This is expected that the students might give good result on the test taking.

Since the test is aimed at measuring students' English proficiency covered with some skills such as listening, reading, grammar, writing, vocabulary and error analysis, therefore, it is determined to be

difficult for lots of students. As the result, not few students failed after taking the test; they even were

unable to meet the minimum standard. Global English Center as an English Course at Manado declared that most of the students who carried out TOEFL pre- test before joining the TOEFL preparation class in the year of 2022 about 45 % of them failed. Even though some of the test takers were from English department students. From this case, thus, all these lead the researcher to do further research in the specific area; as the drawbacks of less grammar skill mastery faced by the students in

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Various study has been carried out to explore the the importance of identifying the drawbacks faced by the test takers in answering TOEFL test. Halim (2008) claimed that the students commonly encountered difficulties in answering TOEFL questions particularly grammar skill as a cause of bias. Mahmud (2014) said that the main problems of the students in the TOEFL test were due to several contradicted reasons, such as no basic skills, less practice, and students' capacity such as age and social-status.

Based on some previous related studies above, it can be concluded that TOEFL test questions in grammar skill still become problems for most of the students and test takers in the scope of English proficiency test. Whilst, it can not be denied that there are still a lot of problems the students might feel difficult in answering the TOEFL test especially the pre-test.

To the contrary, the test takers are still found it is hard to fulfil the admissions process due to ineligible basic skills, less practice as well as little motivation to be better in mastering

English academic skills Mahmud (2014). Last but not least, the social status and age take great roles as a part of contribution to the learning process in order to achieve the satisfied result

2.1. Description of the TOEFL Test

The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is an examination used to evaluate a non-native English speaker's proficiency in the English language. The format of TOEFL test can be seen in the following table

2.2. Table

Tabel 1. TOEFL format

Number of Items	Time
Listening Comprehension	
Part A similar statement identification	20
Part B questions over short conversations	15
Part C questions over mini-talks	15
Total	50
Structure and Written Expression	
Identifying correct completion	15
Identifying incorrect words or phrases	25
Total	40
Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension	
Identify synonyms	30
Reading passages	30
Total	60
Test of Written English (TWE)*	
One essay, 250 – 300 words	30 minutes

Listening comprehension aims at demonstrating capability to understand spoken English. Examinees must listen to a tape and respond to various types of questions. **Structure and written expression** are to demonstrate the ability to recognize grammatically correct English. **Vocabulary and Reading comprehension** is used to demonstrate the ability to understand written English. **Test of Written English**, is an essay on a given topic in thirty minutes to demonstrate the ability of the test taker to produce correct and meaningful English essay.

Nevertheless, the scoring system in TOEFL test is not considered as the percentage of correct answers. In case the particular test is more difficult, the converted score would reflect the same English ability that the taker's score on an accessible version would reflect.

2.3 RESEARCH METHOD

This research used a descriptive method since the target of this research was to describe, explain, and explore issues referred to the drawbacks of TOEFL pre- test by the students and test takers. It also covered a qualitative research and descriptive as well as explanatory.

a. Respondents

The population of this research consisted of the students of Global English Center in Manado The researcher selected 25 students who have already sat

for the TOEFL pre-test as the sample. Moreover, the sampling technique used is purposive technique.

b. Instruments

In doing the research, the researcher uses questionnaires in order to figure out the the drawbacks in the TOEFL pre- test.

c. Procedures

The data collection was on the following order :

1. To list the target population of the research;
 2. To select the sample subject (the students of Global English Center Manado in year of 2022)
 3. To distribute a questionnaire to the sample;
 4. To collect the survey of the sample participants;
- d. Data analysis

This research applied data-collection analysis. The analysis is generally inductive and multi staged of the process of organizing, categorizing, interpreting and writing.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

FINDING

The findings of this research were taken from the result of distributing the questionnaires; According to the focus of this research, the data found were displayed and concentrated on the difficulties faced by the students in doing TOEFL pre- test. From the questionnaire distributed before to the sample, it was found that most of the respondents encountered some

barriers in the TOEFL pre -test. In accordance with Mahmud’s research (2014), he investigated that the problems faced by the students in responding TOEFL pre- tests questions were (1) ineligible basic skills; (2) less practice; and (3) Students’ capability. Therefore, there were three variables of difficulties have been indicated in Mahmud's research (2014). Those problems then elaborated with the findings obtained from the questionnaire data, as follows:

3.1. Ineligible Basic Skills

TOEFL pre- test which the respondents have answered were for internally used only. The TOEFL scores obtained by the students were indicated as their basic skills in TOEFL. From 25 students taken as samples, there were 4 respondents or 17,68 % from the sample got TOEFL score beneath 350. Next, for the score range between 350 to 375, there were 21

respondents or 79,78 % been in this scope. The last range score found were in group of 450 to 550 with number of students. This condition might happen because they had less motivation of English allow

them to have no interest to practice it. It is assumed that, even though they have learned English for years, they still need adjustment towards the TOEFL test. This questionnaire, however, revealed that ineligible basic skills is the massive problem encountered by the students. It is also proved to be the students' problem in answering the TOEFL pre – test.

3.2. Less Practice

From the respondents’ answer to the practice question, there were about 33,3% out of 25 students stated that they need more practice. Although the implementation of the exercise has been carried out twice, it is still considered lacking by them. They want it done as frequently as possible. Generally, an English course carry TOEFL simulation three times, one test was held before the students joining the course as the placement test to identify the students’ initial knowledge. The second test then is held as midterm test. It is carried out to figure out how far the students comprehend in answering TOEFL pre - test questions.

The students had a simulation class before joining the pre -test. On that preparation class, the tips and tricks were given in answering the TOEFL question along with the examples of the questions and its explanations. However, this is considered less by the students. It is proven by the questionnaire's result where 15 students said that they need more practice during the preparation class. The respondents showed the need of practice should be done more than it used to 7 or 10 %. Unluckily, no respondents got score 550 above.

3.3. Students’ Capability

In many language test research analyses, personal background was considered to have small but significant effects on language tests such as native language, sex, ages and institution status. According to Zeidner said that Native language may lead to difficulties in answering other language questions since the interferences of the first language into the second languagemay occur (Zeidner, 1987).

The participants in this research were fifteen female students and ten male students. All were between 19 and 26 years old. In fact, most of them had already joined the simulation test for once and twice before. They had the score between 310 and 450.

DISCUSSION

TOEFL as a test tool to measure the proficiency of English is commonly used in various **institutions in** Indonesia, both formal or informal education. The step for English grammar practice is how to expose the students to a lot of written and spoken English. That way will make you less likely to make mistakes with TOEFL pre - test.

We realized that many factors caused the problems. For instance, lack of practicing, although this is not

the main factor. Similarly, the researcher determined that practice is the best way to be more perfect in conducting TOEFL pre –test.

Although the minimum score would be different on institution respectively and likely to be far from the international standard, thereby, the students do not take this TOEFL problem

seriously. That is the reason why less proficient in English, will be possibly needed more time to prepare for the TOEFL. Being commitment on time to improving the English academic skills such as watching English news and communicating with native speakers. Then, specifically start to be more focus to the TOEFL

test. Moreover, as many as ten students (10,10%) out of twenty five proclaimed that they needed more practice in TOEFL Pre-test.

Still, the students' capability such as the age of respondents and gender that seemed had no effects on the students' difficulties in answering the TOEFL test. The students, however, they have fewer basic skills especially in English, but if they have high motivation in learning English, it will lead them to do more practice and automatically will achieve the best result in getting great skills. Besides, even though the student is a smart one but lazy, he/she will be beaten by those who are mediocre but diligent.

4. CONCLUSION

Referring to the Findings and discussion of the data analysis, it is found that the drawbacks faced by the students and the English learners in undertaking TOEFL pre- test came from 3 main drawbacks. The first was, ineligible basic skills, that is related to the student's strong ability in answering TOEFL test questions, the second was less practice which focused on their time allocation of practicing English in TOEFL for more specific area and the third was students' capability which might derive from the external and internal factors.

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