

Difficulties of Non-English Study Program Students in Taking the TOEFL-Like Test at Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta: A Case Study of UMY Economics Study Program Students batch 2022

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Abstract. This study aims to examine TOEFL-like results and the challenges faced by non-English-speaking students attempting TOEFL-like questions. This examination utilized a subjective illustrative technique, with an example size of 30 understudies chosen through purposive inspecting from a more extensive populace of 100 understudies. Interviews and a TOEFL-like test are two methods of data collection. According to the data, participants found Structure and Written Expression to be the most challenging of the three sections of the TOEFL-like test, followed by Reading Comprehension and Listening Comprehension. It is possible to draw the conclusion that non-English study program students face the greatest difficulty on the TOEFL-like Structure and Written Expression section. The Design was appraised as more troublesome than the Composed Articulation part. The Reading Comprehension section is the second most challenging for students. The data indicate that the most challenging aspect of Reading Comprehension is the identification of difficult words; however, subjects, explanatory sentences, and references are deemed easier than the others. The Listening Comprehension section appears to be the most straightforward. They have trouble following conversations that are both long and short in length. Overall, this study reveals the specific challenges that non-English study program students face when answering TOEFL-like exam questions, highlighting areas in which they need additional support and attention to improve their language learning prospects.

Keywords: difficulty, non-English, TOEFL

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1 INTRODUCTION

Countries that require English as a foreign language typically use the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) as a validity measure for an individual's English language proficiency. Not only are English language proficiency tests required to continue studying abroad, but they are also required to complete studies at universities or other institutions. The TOEFL is a requirement for scholarships and university admission [1]. A few colleges in Indonesia require the TOEFL test as a feature of their graduation rules. In Indonesia, passing the TOEFL is also a prerequisite for admission to higher education. At Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta (UMY), on the other hand, passing the TOEFL exam is required for graduation. Using the TOEFL as a measure of language mastery, this requirement aims to improve students' English language proficiency. UMY makes the students to take TOEFL-like test at Language Training Center (LTC). Based on data provided by LTC UMY, many students from non-English study programs, for example the Economics study program, have difficulty answering TOEFL questions and do not pass the required minimum score from each of the study program.

Ironically, students who took the TOEFL Preparation course also failed to achieve the required minimum score of 450. Even many of them need to take the TOEFL multiple times to pass. In light of the issues over, the creator is keen on researching the elements of trouble looked by non-English review program understudies in addressing TOEFL-like inquiries.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Based on the previous study, several researchers have explored the challenge the TOEFL-like test takers face. In 2014, Mahmud identified the main problems as lacking basic skills, limited practices, lack of motivation, and individual differences, such as age and social status [2].

In contrast, Kurniawati focused on health, difficulty understanding material, lack of support, and lack of exercise as contributors to the challenge of improving English listening skills in the Listening Comprehension section in 2015 [3]. The challenges faced by TOEFL-like test takers were outlined in those studies. As a result, its function is to comprehend and overcome those challenges. This research focuses specifically on students enrolled in non-English study programs at UMY, specifically students of the Economics study program Class of 2022, in contrast to previous research that examined the general challenges faced by TOEFL-like test takers. The point is to figure out the troubles looked by these understudies in responding to TOEFL-like test questions, which measure their English language capability. This study aims to provide targeted solutions by identifying and comprehending the obstacles solution and to improve the material of TOEFL Preparation Course, especially for the Economics study program students, thereby to ease the preparation of the TOEFL-like test.

2.1 The Definition of TOEFL

The Test of English as a Foreign Language, or TOEFL for short, is a well-known exam that is widely used all over the world. Clark causes to notice the way that the Instructive Testing Administration (ETS) reports that the TOEFL has been taken by in excess of 27 million people from 9,000 educational establishments and institutions in more than 130 nations [4]. In any case, it ought to be noticed that Kartikasari et al. in 2014 contended that TOEFL doesn't associate straightforwardly with learning results [5]. In a similar vein, Brown's theory asserts that the TOEFL is merely a proficiency test that does not directly assess

learning outcomes [6]. On this test, English language proficiency is evaluated using skills like listening comprehension, reading comprehension, and structure and written expressions. At UMY, the TOEFL-like exam is typically given in a Paper Based Test (PBT) format at the Language Training Center.

2.2 Listening Comprehension

Listening Comprehension is a vital ability evaluated in TOEFL, including members effectively paying attention to sound discussions. Listening comprehension is the cognitive process of comprehending spoken language, as Nadig explains [7]. It encompasses the capacity to comprehend sentence structures, individual word meanings, and speech sound interpretation. Due primarily to the presence of native English speakers in the audio recordings, non-native English speakers taking the TOEFL frequently encounter difficulties in this skill. Participants' performance in this listening skill is significantly influenced by vocabulary depth, grammar, intonation, pitch, and rhythm. This is in accordance with Hamouda's explanation that understanding discussions presents huge hardships for understudies, as they experience different requirements while paying attention to unknown dialects [8].

2.3 Structure and Written Expressions

Structure and Written Expressions is the second skill tested on the TOEFL. This skill has two parts, namely Structure and Written Expression. To participate in structure, participants must be proficient in English grammar and complete 15 imperfect sentences—that is, participants must use proper English grammar to complete imperfect sentences. Members select one of the available options to complete the sentence. The next requirement for participants in Written Expression is to identify inappropriate words or groups of words. This section has a total of 25 questions with highlighted words or word groups. The sentences that are used in this section typically have to do with academic articles about topics like health, education, culture, and so on. In academic writing, compound and complex sentences are frequently used to test skills. This is consistent with the explanation provided by Bachman and Palmer (1996, 68-75), who state that students' language skills are made up of two components: competence/metacognitive and language knowledge [9]. To achieve communicative objectives, students need to be familiar with vocabulary, grammar, and coherent sentence structure.

2.4 Reading Comprehension

The third section of the TOEFL is Reading Comprehension, which is the final skill tested. This expertise assesses the member's capacity to comprehend and extricate significance from composed text, trailed by a progression of related questions. Topics, supporting/explanatory sentences, references, and identifying difficult vocabulary in the text are all covered by these questions. This ability necessitates proficiency in linguistics, psycholinguistics, social comprehension, and pragmatics. In 2016, Woolley stated that reading comprehension is a complicated process in which linguistic, psycholinguistic, social, and pragmatic skills all play a role in making sense of written material [10]. Perusing perception likewise depends vigorously on jargon extravagance notwithstanding the previously mentioned capacities. In their study "The Relationship between Vocabulary Size and Reading Comprehension of ESL Learners," Ibrahim et al. (2016) investigated this connection and discovered a significant link between vocabulary size and reading comprehension [11].

3 METHODOLOGY

This study employs a mixed-method design with an embedded approach that incorporates both quantitative and qualitative data. Both kinds of data were looked at, with quantitative data analysis getting the most attention. Creswell's explanation of mixed methods data collection and analysis [12] is consistent with this strategy (2012:544). Purposive sampling was used to select a sample size of 30 students from a total population of 100 students for this study. The primary focus of this study is the implementation of a descriptive questionnaire (survey) in the UMY Economics program. Web-based questionnaire tools, specifically the Google Form questionnaire, were utilized for data collection. The convenience of the respondents and researchers was the primary consideration when selecting the Google Form questionnaire. Additionally, the questionnaire's Google Form feature offers analysis in the form of bar graphs or pie charts, making it simpler to comprehend response patterns. Students in the Economics program who are taking or have taken the TOEFL-like test at the UMY Language Training Center are the intended research participants.

Information assortment included completing the TOEFL-like test and meetings. The multiple-choice section of the TOEFL-like exam has 50 questions for listening comprehension, 40 questions for structure and written expression, and 50 questions for reading comprehension. There were 140 questions on the test. The TOEFL test results were dissected to decide the most difficult abilities that members confronted Think about the abilities with the least typical score as the most troublesome while answering TOEFL questions. As an addition to the quantitative data, qualitative interviews were also conducted. Participants were given the opportunity to verbally express the skills they found most challenging when taking the TOEFL-like test during these interviews.

4 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results

This study's findings are based not only on the TOEFL exam results but also on questionnaires and interviews with TOEFL test takers that were conducted between December 2022 and January 2023. There are three main factors that contribute to individual TOEFL difficulties, as revealed by the interviews and questionnaire results. These elements incorporate the significant time-frame spent planning and taking the TOEFL test, understudies' restricted capacity to dominate jargon, and trouble getting a handle on importance, particularly in listening questions, because of contrasts in the way to express words/phrases in Indonesian. Structure and Written Expressions, Reading Comprehension, and Listening Comprehension are the three chronologically arranged skills that students find most challenging on the TOEFL-like test. Qualitative interviews and quantitative diagnostic tests are the two types of data that researchers collect.

Table 1. The Average Score of Students' Ability in the TOEFL-like

Skill	Listening Comprehension	Structure and Written Comprehension	Reading Comprehension
The Average Score	437	374	429

The average Listening Comprehension proficiency of students falls into the adequate user category and is 437. In addition, in the adequate user category, Reading Comprehension receives an average score of 429 and Structure and Written Expression

receives an average score of 374. The lowest average score is given for Structure and Written Expression, followed by Reading Comprehension and Listening Comprehension.

4.1.1 Structure and Written Expression

When students take the TOEFL, the section on structure and written expression becomes the most challenging. There are two skills in the section on Structure and Written Expression: Structure and Written Expression. According to the interviews, 53.33% of students stated that written expression was more difficult than structure, and 46.66% stated that structure was more difficult than written expression. The chart that follows illustrates the outcomes of the two instruments in greater detail.

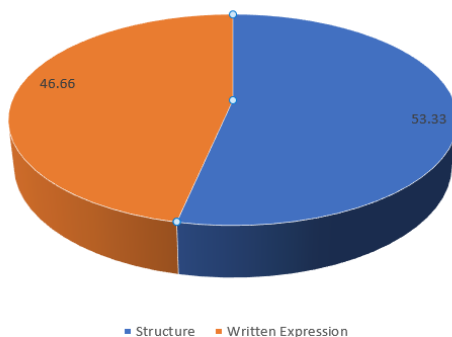


Fig. 1. The Percentage of Student Answers Determines the Most Difficult Skill in the Structure and Written Expression Section.

It is possible to draw the conclusion, based on the above results of the TOEFL test, questionnaire, and interview, that the results of the interview back up the results of the TOEFL test, which show that writing expressions are more challenging than structures when completing the TOEFL.

4.1.2 Reading Comprehension

The third section of the TOEFL-like reading comprehension test consists of four skills, including skills for recognizing topics, explanatory sentences, unfamiliar words, and references. As evidenced by the collection of data through diagnostic tests and interviews, this section is the second most challenging on a TOEFL-like test. Check out the following chart for more information:

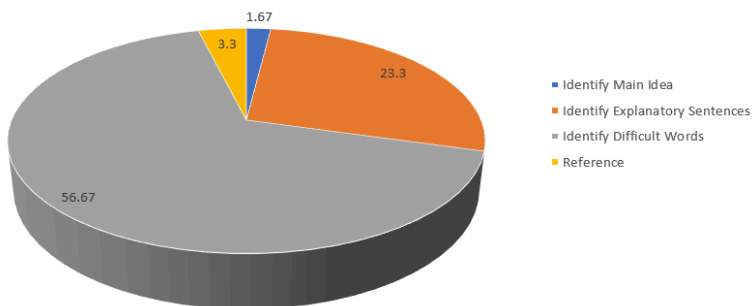


Fig. 2. The Percentage of Student Answers Determines the Most Difficult Skill in the Reading Section.

According to the findings of the questionnaires and interviews, 56.67 percent of students stated that the reading comprehension section's most challenging skill was identifying difficult words. In addition, students in the Reading Comprehension section rate the ability to identify explanatory sentences as the second most challenging skill. This is shown in Table 3 by the fact that identifying explanatory sentences was rated as the most challenging skill by 23.3% of students. The third most troublesome in Perusing Perception area is the ability of distinguish principal thought, then, at that point, followed with the expertise to track down reference.

4.1.3 Listening Comprehension

As can be seen from the preceding data in Table 1, Listening Comprehension has the highest average of all the parts, making it the easiest. Short Dialogue, Long Conversation, and Long Talks are the three listening comprehension skills. Short conversation is regarded as the easiest of these three skills, while long conversation is the most challenging.

From the aftereffects of meetings, when the creator inquired, "Which expertise did you see as most troublesome in the Listening Cognizance area?" Specialists found solutions that 70% of understudies addressed that Significant Discussion was the most troublesome expertise in the Listening Cognizance segment, 20% of understudies addressed that Meaningful conversations was the most troublesome ability in the Listening Understanding area, and 10% of understudies addressed that Short Exchange was the most troublesome ability. The data can be outlined in the following chart for clarity:

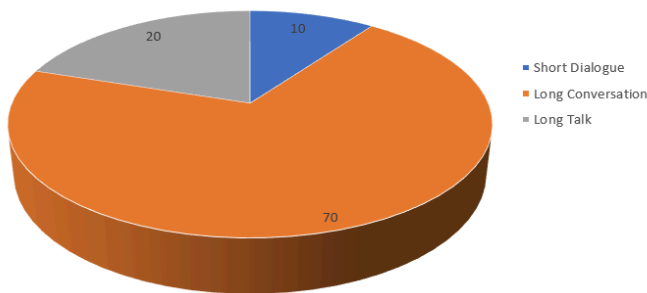


Fig. 3. The Percentage of Student Answers Determines the Most Difficult Skill in the Listening Section.

In view of the after effects of the TOEFL test and the surveys and meetings above, it tends to be reasoned that the two instruments give answers that are in line. The interviews back up the results of the TOEFL-like test, which found that students had the most trouble with Long Conversation, Long Talks, and Short Dialogue in the Listening Comprehension section. In addition to the challenges students face when preparing for the TOEFL-like test.

Understudies likewise confronted a few troubles and deterrents as expressed in the meeting. Students also have to deal with the following issues:

- *The Students' Lack of Ability to Master Vocabularies*

The first difficulties aspect in coping with TOEFL-like tasks is a lack of vocabulary proficiency, particularly in the listening and reading portions. A few researchers have investigated this, including David (2016), who composed a paper named "Examining the

Connection between Jargon Information and Scholarly Understanding Execution" [13]. This study exhibits the meaning of the jargon/jargon part in managing the TOEFL-like. Vocabulary and understanding the meaning of words are a factor in the difficulty of answering TOEFL-like questions, according to interviews and questionnaire analyses.

A student stated during the interview that he has problem in mastering English vocabulary.

Excerpt 1:

“Kosakata yang saya kuasai sangat terbatas, sehingga saya tidak bisa maksimal mengerjakan pada bagian Reading.”

“The vocabulary I master is very limited, so I can't do the Reading part optimally.”

- *Time in TOEFL-like Preparation Learning*

The second problem aspect that students confront when tackling TOEFL-like questions is a lack of time management skills. In other words, pupils cannot work on the questions optimally within the time constraints. Some noted that the time provided was insufficient, and that it took a long time to practice and discuss the TOEFL-like test questions before taking the test.

Excerpt 2:

“Saat mengerjakan bagian Reading, masih ada 7 nomer belum saya kerjakan, tetapi waktunya habis.”

“When working on the Reading section, I still had 7 numbers that I hadn't done, but the time was up.”

- *Lack of Practice and Exercise*

The third reason students have trouble passing the TOEFL-like is a lack of practice. During interviews and questionnaire analysis, approximately 30% of students expressed this. It is consistent with the following quote from the student's interview:

Excerpt 3:

“Saya pikir saya tidak bisa maksimal mengerjakan soal TOEFL karena saya kurang Latihan soal-soal TOEFL dan tidak belajar sebelumnya.”

“I thought I couldn't do the TOEFL questions optimally because I didn't practice enough TOEFL questions and didn't study beforehand.”

- *Difficulties in Capturing Meaning*

It occurs in listening questions due to variations in the pronunciation of words/phrases in Indonesian. Because English pronunciation differs from Indonesian pronunciation, test takers have additional challenges when answering TOEFL-like questions, particularly the listening comprehension section. This is demonstrated by the responses of those who were interviewed. The following excerpt show this condition;

Excerpt 4:

“Menurut saya bagian Listening adalah yang paling sulit karena saya tidak paham apa yang dibicarakan di audionya.”

“I think the Listening part is the most difficult because I don't understand what is being said in the audio.”

4.2 Discussion

According to the findings of the previous study, students majoring in non-English study programs at the same tertiary institution face a lack of vocabulary proficiency as the

primary obstacle. Knowledge of vocabulary is essential because it significantly aids in the resolution of TOEFL-like questions, particularly those pertaining to reading. This is in accordance with the consequences of concentrate by Akbarian and Alavi (2016) from Iran, who expressed that an elevated degree of jargon gives a huge commitment to the exhibition of responding to TOEFL questions [14]. In addition, the second finding is that due to time constraints, students are unable to answer problems effectively. This study supports the findings of Lubis, L.R. (2019), who discovered that a lack of time was the most significant barrier to taking the TOEFL at IPTS (South Tapanuli Educational Institute) [15].

The lack of practice presents the third difficulty for students. This is in line with Halim's (2014) study, which found that students' difficulty answering TOEFL-like questions is second-most commonly caused by a lack of practice [16]. The pronunciation, which differs from Indonesian, is the final obstacle that students face when taking the TOEFL-like exam. This trouble just happens in the listening cognizance segment, not in the design and composing articulation or perusing perception areas. Before taking the TOEFL-like test, the authors suggest that participants take a preparation course to address all of the aforementioned issues. Participants will also learn how to avoid being powerful deceivers when answering TOEFL-style questions as the preparation course will teach them how to manage their time and expand their vocabulary. Additionally, in addition to existing instruction, independent study can help overcome pronunciations that differ from Indonesian.

5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Conclusion

Participants in the TOEFL-like test believe that the section on Structure and Written Expression is the most difficult based on the data analysis and explanations provided. According to the findings, structure is more difficult than written expression. Reading Comprehension is the second most difficult section for students. Detecting difficult words in reading comprehension is thought to be the most challenging skill, while identifying core ideas, explaining sentences, and references are thought to be relatively easier. The simplest of the three is the Listening Comprehension section. Understudies battle particularly with seeing progressively lengthy visits, broadened talks, and brief talk.

5.2 Recommendation

Numerous suggestions for assisting students in improving their performance on the TOEFL-like test can be made on the basis of these data. To get started, it's recommended to provide practice and materials that focus on the skills needed for Listening Comprehension, like how to deal with longer conversations and different types of conversations. In addition, in order to better address the issues outlined in the section on Structure and Written Expression, efforts ought to be made to increase students' awareness of and mastery of the structural parts of the English language. The development of strategies for recognizing difficult words and improving overall reading comprehension abilities should be the primary focuses of reading comprehension. Effective TOEFL preparation materials and instructional strategies that address the individual needs of students can be driven by these suggestions.

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