

**DIFFICULTIES FOUND BY ENGLISH STUDENTS IN ACHIEVING
HIGH SCORE OF TOEFL IN ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDY PROGRAM
OF MUHAMMADIYAH UNIVERSITY OF BENGKULU**

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Abstract

The objectives of this research are: 1) to identify the difficulties found by the English students of Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu in achieving high score of TOEFL required by the English Study Program of Bengkulu; and 2) to identify the most dominant difficulties found by the English students of Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu in achieving high score of TOEFL required by the English Study Program of Bengkulu. The design of this research is descriptive research. The subjects in this research are the English Study Program students of 2019/2020 Academic year who cannot pass the test in one time. The number of the subjects are 14 students taken from UPT Pusat Bahasa UMB. The instrument used in this research is questionnaire. The data in this research were collected by: 1) Asking the data of students who do not pass the test one time to UPT Pusat Bahasa UMB; 2) Distributing the questionnaire and do the interview to the students in the list of UPT Pusat Bahasa UMB; 3) Collecting the data. The data in this research were analyzed by: 1) Identifying the types of skill become difficult for students; 2) Grouping the students' difficulties; and 3) concluding the results. After finding the results, the researcher would like to conclude that: 1) From all sections of the TOEFL, it can be summarized that the difficulties found by the students are existed in all sections of the TOEFL, but the percentages are different from one to another; and 2) the Structure and Written Expression Section become the most dominant difficulties found by the students because from the average of percentage, it has the highest percentage of difficulties, it is 73,4%.

Key words: *TOEFL, Standardized Score, Difficulties*

I. Introduction

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is probably the most often used examination in the admissions process of foreign students to college and universities in United State (Pyle and Page,1995:4). This indicates that TOEFL is very useful as the requirement for students to continue their education or study in university abroad, especially in United State.

According to ETS (1997: 7) the purpose of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is to evaluate the English proficiency of people whose native language is not English. The test was initially developed to measure the English proficiency of international students wishing to study at colleges and universities in the United States and Canada, and this continues to be its primary function. However, a number of academic institutions in other countries, as well as certain independent organizations, agencies,

and foreign governments, have also found the test scores useful. The TOEFL test is recommended for students at the eleventh-grade level or above; the test content is considered too difficult for younger students. It can be summarized that the TOEFL has the purpose to evaluate the English proficiency of people non-native English, and to measure the English proficiency of students outside of USA and Canada who wish to continue their study at colleges and universities in those countries.

The use of TOEFL is not only needed for continuing study to the higher level. It is also used for the part of requirements in applying job, and for certain requirements such as for the students who want to graduate from a university or requirement for the thesis examination.

In all Study Programs of Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu, the students who want to follow the thesis examination, they must follow the TOEFL prediction test in UPT Pusat Bahasa

UMB. It is based on the SK Rektor No. 304/SK/R.01-UMB/2016. Especially for English students, they must pass the standardized score 450, if they cannot pass the standard score, their thesis examination will be postponed. The standardized TOEFL score for English Students when they want to apply thesis examination is stated in the Students Academic Consultation Book (Buku Konsultasi Akademik Mahasiswa) of English Study Program of Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu. The requirement for standardized score is exist in the point 5 'submit the sertificate of TOEFL from UPT Pusat Bahasa with the minimum score 450.

After asking for the information about the participants scores to UPT Pusat Bahasa UMB and to the students who have taken the test, it is known that there are still many students who cannot pass the test. They take the test more than once time.

From that fact, the researcher thinks that it must be the difficulties found by the students to pass the tes. According to Penny (2000) and Antoni (2014), the main problem faced is that the students do not have a good preparation before following a test of English as a foreign language; and some students are problematic with speaking and listening. It is hard for them to communicate in English whether to listen or to speak. In the other cases, some students are confused with grammar and vocabulary. All those problems also cause the students get low with their English subject.

From the fact above, the researcher thinks it is needed to do the research about what difficulties found by the students so that they cannot pass standardized score required by the English Study Program of UMB. The researcher formulate the questions as follows. The objectives of this research are: 1) to identify the difficulties found by the English students of Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu in achieving high score of TOEFL required by the English Study Program of Bengkulu, and 2) to identify the most dominant difficulties found by the English students of Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu in achieving high score of TOEFL required by the English Study Program of Bengkulu.

II. Methodology

The design of this research is descriptive research. According to Maxwell (1996:17), descriptive research is the research that focused on specific situation or people, and its emphasis on words rather than numbers, which describes the real condition to the phenomena. This research describes the English students' difficulties in achieving high score of TOEFL in English Study Program at Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu. The subject of this research is students who do not reach the standardized score of TOEFL in English Study Program of UMB in one time of test. Many students cannot reach the standardized score of TOEFL test in one time of test. So they must follow the re-test. Sometimes they must take the re-test more than two times. If they still cannot reach the score, they are not allowed to follow the thesis examination. The subjects in this research are the English Study Program students of 2019/2020 Academic year who cannot pass the test in one time. The number of the subjects are 14 students taken from UPT Pusat Bahasa UMB. Instrument is something used in performing a work (Ary et al, 2010). The instrument is questionnaire. The questionnaire contained the types of skills difficult found by the English students. From the questionnaire it can be known what skills become difficult for students to reach the standardized score TOEFL.

III. Results And Discussion

A. Results

Difficulties found by the English students

The data in this research were taken from the English Study Program students of 2019/2020 Academic year who cannot pass the TOEFL Prediction test in one time. From 14 students as the subject, there were only 13 students who answered the questionnaire because 1 student did not come. The data are about the students' difficulties in the fields of Reading Comprehension, Structure and Written Expressions, and Reading Comprehension section of the TOEFL.

The data will be described in each field of difficulty. They are presented in the tables below.

Table 1. Students difficulties in Listening Comprehension

Items No.	Students' answers				Total
	Yes	%	No	%	
1	13	100%	0	0%	100%
2	8	61,5%	5	38,5%	100%
3	8	61,5%	5	38,5%	100%
4	7	53,8%	6	46,2%	100%
5	11	84,6%	2	15,4%	100%
6	9	81,8%	4	18,2%	100%
7	8	61,5%	5	38,5%	100%
Mean of percentage		57,8%		42,4%	

From the table 1 above, it can be seen that all of the students difficult to complete the questions no. 1 related to the *main idea and re-statement* with 100%. Next, the second position of students' difficulties is in the question no. 5 related to the *use of active and passive sentences* with 84,6%. The third position is the difficulties in the questions no. 2 related to *understanding the context of conversation*; no. 3 related to the conclusion

of *who is speaking in the conversation*; and question no. 7 related to the *agreement*. Those difficulties have the percentage 61,5%. The last position of the students' difficulties if in the question no. 4 related to the conclusion of *where the conversation takes place* with 53,8%. From the students' difficulties in Listening Comprehension, the mean or average percentage is **57,8%**.

Table 2. Students difficulties in Structure and Written Expressions

Items No.	Students' answers				Total
	Yes	%	No	%	
1	8	62%	5	38%	100%
2	10	77%	3	23%	100%
3	12	92%	1	8%	100%
4	10	77%	3	23%	100%
5	7	54%	6	46%	100%
6	5	38%	8	62%	100%
7	7	54%	6	46%	100%
8	8	62%	5	38%	100%
9	9	69%	4	31%	100%
10	11	85%	2	15%	100%
Mean of percentage		73,4%		26,6%	

From the table 2 above, it can be seen that the most difficult item for students in structure and Written expression of TOEFL is no. 3 related to the use of *gerund and infinitive* with 92%. It is followed by item

no. 10 related to the use of *preposition* with 85%. Next, item no. 2 related to *connector*, and item no. 4 related to *the use of clauses* with 77%. After that, item no. 9 related to the use of *adjective and adverb* with 69%.

Next, item no. 1 related to *subject verb agreement* with 62%. Then, item no. 5 related to *parallel structure* with 54%. It is followed by items no. 7, 6, and 8 with the

percentages are 46%, 38%, and 38%. From the students' difficulties in Structure and Written Expressions, the mean or average percentage is **73,4%**.

Table 3. Students difficulties in Reading Comprehension

Items No.	Students' answers				Total
	Yes	%	No	%	
1	6	46%	7	54%	100%
2	11	85%	2	15%	100%
3	11	85%	2	15%	100%
4	11	85%	2	15%	100%
5	7	54%	6	46%	100%
Mean of percentage		70,8%		29,2%	

From the table 3 above, it can be seen that there are 3 items of questions that become the most difficulty for the students. They are items no. 2 related to *implied detailed questions*; item no. 3 related to *Stated Detailed Questions*; and item no 4 related to *Unstated Detailed Question* with the percentage is 85%. The second position is item no 5 related to *Vocabulary Question* with 54%; and the last is item no. 1 related to *determining the main idea of the text* with 46%. From the students' difficulties in Reading Comprehension, the mean or average percentage is **70,8%**.

From all sections of the TOEFL, it can be summarized that the difficulties found by the students are existed in all sections of the TOEFL, but the percentages are different from one to another.

The Most Dominant Difficulties found by the English students

From the table of students' difficulties in achieving high score of TOEFL presented before, it is known that the Structure and Written Expression Section become the most dominant difficulties found by the students because from the average of percentage, it has the highest percentage of difficulties, it is 73,4%.

This result is same with the result of their test that showed their scores in structure and written expression are lower than the Listening Comprehension and Reading Comprehension.

B. Discussion

Based on the results, it is found by the researcher that the most difficult part of the TOEFL for the english students of Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu in Academic Year 2019/2020 in achieving high score is in the part of Structure and Written Expression section. Here, there are four items that most difficult, they are related to the use of *gerund and infinitive*; related to the use of *preposition*; related to *connector*, and related to *the use of clauses*. The next difficulty is in the Reading Comprehension Section, and the last is in the Listening Comprehension Section.

Related to the Structure and Written Expression, the result is similar to the research of Ubaedillah (2020), from the findings of the research, it can be stated that management's students have difficulties in the structure and written expressions section on the TOEFL test. These difficulties become the major causes of students' failure in achieving this test successfully. The research findings reveal that there are 8 items

considered as the most difficult elements in grammar use found in the TOEFL test. The items are word order, parallel structure, singular and plural noun, missing and extra words, article, comparative and superlative, word choice, and word form. Besides, the findings also report that there are some factors which dominated the management's students' difficulty in the structure and written expression section of the TOEFL test. The factors are unfamiliarity with the TOEFL Test, lack of practice, and lack of grammatical competence.

It is also almost similar to the result of Kristiyanti (2018), the finding of this study shows some points as follows: (1) areas of most incorrect answers such as Structure and Written Expression; the problems of subject-verb agreement, tenses, nouns and the use of article.

Related to the Reading Comprehension Section, there are 3 items of questions that become the most difficulty for the students. They are related to *implied detailed questions*; related to *Stated Detailed Questions*; and related to *Unstated Detailed Question*. According to the result of research by Putri (2020), the results of the questionnaire regarding the students' difficulties in passing the TOEFL test indicated that 14 out of 25 students or 56% agreed that the most difficult test in TOEFL test is reading comprehension, and 8 out of 25 students or 32% strongly agree that the allocating time of TOEFL test is not enough for them; it means they had difficulties in managing their time.

The last, related to the Listening Comprehension Section, there are two most difficult for the students, namely related to the *main idea and re-statement*, and related to the *use of active and passive sentences* with 84,6%. The difficulty in main idea and re-statement is related to the difficulty in determining the correct answer in the listening comprehension that is an answer that contains a restatement of the ideas in the second line of the conversation. The test taker will be asked to know the key ideas of the conversation. Then, the difficulty in the

use of active and passive is the difficulty to understand about who and what is the action of the man or woman. The test taker has to analyse the audio whether it is active or passive. If the audio is passive, the answer generally will active.

IV. Conclusion And Suggestions

A. Conclusion

After finding the results, the researcher would like to conclude that: 1) From all sections of the TOEFL, it can be summarized that the difficulties found by the students are existed in all sections of the TOEFL, but the percentages are different from one to another; and 2) the Structure and Written Expression Section become the most dominant difficulties found by the students because from the average of percentage, it has the highest percentage of difficulties, it is 73,4%.

B. Suggestions

Based on the results, the researcher would like to suggest that: 1) the students should practice more about the structure and written expressions because it is the most difficult section; 2) for the next researcher, it is suggested to do the similar research focus on the students' problem in Structure and Written Expressions with deep interview for more data.

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