

THE EFFECT OF TOEFL PREPARATION COURSE ON EFL UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' TOEFL SCORES

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine the effectiveness of the TOEFL preparation course on students' TOEFL scores. The method of this research was quantitative experimental research. 80 EFL students from various study programs in the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, University of Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. HAMKA, participated in this study. Before conducting the preparation program, the students took a TOEFL pre-test. After that, they took a TOEFL preparation class for seven meetings. The TOEFL post-test was used to see participants' scores after the preparation course. This research revealed that the students' scores increased from the previous pre-test. Thus, TOEFL preparation classes significantly improve students' TOEFL scores and are therefore recommended for students who want to take the TOEFL test.

Keywords: EFL Students, TOEFL, TOEFL Preparation, TOEFL Score

INTRODUCTION

English is an important language since it is used for international communication, not to mention for Indonesian students, especially students in higher education. One of the English tests to measure students' English proficiency is the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language). According to Smart (2019), this test measures English language skills. This test has been developed by Educational Testing Services (ETS) since 1962. This test assesses English language proficiency in terms of communication competence, namely four skill areas:

reading, writing, speaking, and listening. This test has been accepted at universities in many other countries. However, the TOEFL test is a university entry requirement, especially for international students. Besides that,

TOEFL test is usually used by some agencies such as government agencies, business agencies, and scholarships. In addition, this test is used by several universities in Indonesia as one of the graduation requirements.

Despite the importance of the TOEFL, especially for students in higher education, some scholars state that undergraduate students face difficulties in answering the test. Halim (2018) said four challenges faced by EFL students in higher education in the Indonesian context. Students' basic English skills are limited, and they are not used to English because they need to realize its importance. Even though students have already learned English for many years, they still have to adjust to the TOEFL test because this test is something new for them. Less practice is the next difficulty faced by EFL students. Students thought they still needed more practice to get used to the questions on the TOEFL test.

Moreover, they need help managing their time during the test. Next is less motivation; this is an important aspect. Many students take the TOEFL test only for graduation requirements. This affected their success in the TOEFL test because they were not motivated to practice English other than as a requirement for their graduation. Last is students' differences. Students have different backgrounds where they have different gender, ages, race, etc. In Halim's research (2018), some students stated that their local language could affect their English abilities in answering the TOEFL test. Rahman (2021) said that students faced difficulties in answering TOEFL tests, namely limited basic English skills, lack of practice, and lack of motivation in learning TOEFL tests. The common challenges EFL students face are less practice, limited basic English skills, lack of motivation, and students' various backgrounds. Considering these facts, students still need a program such as preparation or a course to enhance their English skills to answer the TOEFL test better. On Halim (2018), it is stated students needed TOEFL preparation classes because the classes got them used to practice TOEFL questions. Also, the classes gave them tips and tricks to answer the questions.

TOEFL preparation program is important for undergraduate students. This course increases students' knowledge about TOEFL and makes them familiar with the test questions; therefore, they will be more skillful in answering the test. On Sudrajat's (2018) research, 86.6% of students had a positive attitude toward the TOEFL preparation course. In addition, it can be trusted that course preparation can help them learn English grammar effectively and master English grammar competencies effectively. In addition, TOEFL preparation can increase their confidence, motivation, and attitude, especially in understanding English grammar,

which focuses on the structure and material of expression. It can be said that TOEFL preparation is essential.

Another expert stated that the effectiveness of TOEFL preparation is from Pranoto's research (2020) which noted that preparation is an excellent step to becoming mentally fit and skilled. Pranoto conducted an experimental study on the effectiveness of TOEFL preparation for reading skills and mastery of structure. Preparation is needed to help students at the pre-intermediate level of English, especially for reading and English structure. This is important for students' English readiness for higher education levels. However, the results showed a positive effect of the TOEFL preparation program on reading skills. Thus, the TOEFL preparation program is essential for students to join to improve their English skills. In addition, it can increase students' motivation, confidence, and attitude in English lessons.

Some scholars ever stated the effectiveness of TOEFL preparation. For example, Pranoto's (2020) research conducted experimental research on the TOEFL preparation program's effectiveness on reading skill and structure skills. In contrast, he only saw the effect of TOEFL preparation on reading and structure and did not see the effect on all skills. It is as same as Simanjuntak's (2018) research which only measures reading skills. Another study from Djamereng (2021) conducted experimental research on the effectiveness of the TOEFL practicum class. This program was held for six meetings to learn TOEFL skills (structure, reading, and listening). The result of the research stated that there is a creation of students' scores after TOEFL practicum class treatment. There are differences from previous research, which in this research, researchers measure all of the skills (listening, structure, and reading). It is different from Pranoto's (2020) research. In addition, this research has more meetings and time in the preparation program, whereas in the treatment phase, there are seven meetings, and it has 90 minutes for a meeting. This is different from Djamereng's (2021) research. It is expected that if the preparation time is longer, students will understand TOEFL better.

From the background above, it can be concluded that the TOEFL test is essential to measure students' English proficiency. Many students take TOEFL tests for reasons such as graduation and scholarship purposes. In contrast, they still face some problems in answering the TOEFL test. Therefore, the TOEFL preparation program is needed for university students to overcome their problems in TOEFL and increase their TOEFL scores. Some scholars even researched the TOEFL preparation program. In this study, the treatment was longer, and this study measured all of the TOEFL skills (listening, structure, and reading). Therefore, this research investigates the effectiveness of the TOEFL preparation course in improving students' TOEFL scores as the question for this research 1). Is the TOEFL preparation course effective in increasing students' TOEFL scores? 2). Is

there any significant difference in the student's TOEFL score after the TOEFL preparation course is carried out?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Some scholars ever researched the effectiveness of the TOEFL preparation program. Simanjuntak (2018) investigated the effectiveness of TOEFL preparation, especially for reading skills. It was an experimental class. Thirty undergraduate students joined this study. After receiving treatment, such as reading lessons, they got the reading test. The instrument used for this research was the TOEFL sample reading test version which the item number was 50 questions and the time was 60 minutes. Thus, the result stated that the effect of TOEFL preparation on the performance of reading scores was more visible. However, this study only sees the effect of TOEFL preparation on reading skills.

It is the same as Pranoto (2020), which conducted experimental research on the TOEFL preparation effect on reading and structure skills for senior high school students who would continue their studies to college. TOEFL preparation was needed for their English preparation in university. This study used a one-group experiment design. The participants of this research were all third-grade students in senior high school. The students took a pre-test before they got treatment. The TOEFL preparation program had five days (including pre-test, treatment, and post-test). The result stated that the positive effect of TOEFL preparation only affected reading skills.

Meanwhile, Djamereng (2021) conducted TOEFL preparation experiment research for all skills. This study used experimental research, and pre-test and post-test were used as the research design. However, the sample used for this research was 64 undergraduate students from English and literature major. This study has three stages: preparation, implementation, and evaluation. Thus, this study has six meetings of preparation class, in which students were taught how to answer reading, listening, and structure questions properly. According to the pre-test and post-test results, it can be seen that there was an increase in students' TOEFL scores after getting treatment.

To conclude, some scholars have conducted previous research related to TOEFL preparation. Some of them only measure certain skills, such as reading and structure. However, all skills should be measured to see the effectiveness of TOEFL preparation. In addition, a longer preparation time and meeting are needed to make students understand better.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research used a quantitative method. Based on Gay (2010), the quantitative method is used to collect numerical analysis data and then analyze it statistically. The researcher used pre-experimental research by applying a one-group pre-test/post-test design. There is only one group that got treatment in this design. The group took a pre-test, then was given some treatment, and finally got a post-test. This research also used only one group of undergraduate students. They got a pre-test for the TOEFL test, and they were enrolled in a TOEFL preparation course. Finally, after the course, a post-test was given to see how effective the treatment was. The treatment was held from the beginning of March 2022 until the middle of April 2022. This course was held in seven meetings, each 90 minutes long. The instructors for the course were lecturers from the English Department of Uhamka. The materials taught in the course were the listening section in two meetings, the structure and written expression section in two meetings, and the reading comprehension section in two meetings. The last meeting was a review session in which the students reviewed the TOEFL materials from all three sections. The data (pre-test and post-test results) was analyzed using SPSS ver 25. The researcher analyzed the normality tests and paired t-tests to answer the research questions. The hypothesis for the research are;

Ho: There is no effect of the TOEFL preparation course on students' TOEFL scores

Ha: There is an effect of the TOEFL preparation course on students' TOEFL scores.

The total number of participants in this research was 80 undergraduate students from the University of Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. HAMKA Jakarta, Indonesia. However, This was a small number of participants due to the number of participants being less than 100. In addition, the students were divided into five classes (there were 16 students in one class) because the class was not overloaded, and the learning activities were more effective for students. The researcher used purposive sampling and took 80 undergraduate students. The participants came from various background majors in the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education. Here is the table of participants;

Table 1.1: Research Participants

		Frequency
Gender	Male	11
	Female	69
	Total	80
Age	20	36
	21	29
	22	12
	23	1
	25	2
	Total	80
Major	Primary School Education	24
	Mathematics Education	15
	Early Childhood Education	6
	History Education	2
	Biology Education	1
	Economy Education	3
	English Education	11
	Physic Education	3
	Guidance and Counselling	6
	Geography Education	4
	Indonesian Education	5
	Total	80

This research instrument was adopted from Baron's book (2000). This is a TOEFL book that contains models of the TOEFL test. The pre-test and post-test instruments included three sections. The first section was listening comprehension (50 items), the second was structure and written expression (40 items), and the last was reading comprehension (50 items). Therefore, there were 140 items in total used for each pre-test and post-test. In the beginning, participants were given TOEFL test for the pre-test. After that, they got a TOEFL preparation course for seven meetings. Two meetings were for preparing the listening section, two for structure and written expression, two for reading comprehension, and one for reviewing the materials given. In addition, the course was held for 90 minutes in a meeting. The instructors of this course were the English lecturers from the English Department of UHAMKA (University of Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. HAMKA). After the researcher got the data (participants' pre-test and post-test scores), the data was analyzed. The researcher did a normality test of the pre-test and post-test scores using Shapiro-Wilk. Then, the researcher did a T-test to see the significant differences between the pre-test and post-test scores and how the TOEFL preparation course affected the participants' TOEFL scores.

FINDING

This section explains the result and findings of this research. It covers normality tests and T-test statistics to answer the research questions.

Normality Test

Table 1.2: Tests of Normality

	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
pre-test	.960	80	.013
post-test	.959	80	.011

The researcher used the Shapiro-Wilk normality test due to the participants being only 80, which was a small number of participants (<100). The result showed that Sig. > .05 in which pre-test sig. 0.13 and post-test Sig. .011. It means that the pre-test and post-test scores used in this research had a normal distribution.

T-Test Statistics

Table 1.2: Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N
Pair 1	Pre-test	413.33	80
	Post-test	438.36	80

Table 1.2 shows that the mean pre-test score was 413.33, and the post-test was 438.36. It can be seen that there was an increase in the mean between the pre-test and the post-test scores.

Table 1.3: Paired T-Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pre-test - Post-test	-25.038	23.997	2.683	-30.378	-19.697	-9.332	79	.000

Table 1.3 shows the calculation by using SPSS ver 25. This result showed that paired sample test or t-test was used to see the significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores. From the table above, the p-value or Sig. (2-tailed) < .05 or .000 < .05. It means that H_0 was rejected and H_a was accepted; in other words, there was a significant difference between participants' pre-test and post-test scores.

From the table above, it could be concluded that the TOEFL preparation class effectively increased students' TOEFL scores. It can be seen from the participants' mean scores that there were differences between their pre-test and post-

test mean. The post-test mean was higher than the pre-test means. In addition, the researcher also analyzed using paired T-tests to see a significant difference between students' pre-test and post-test scores on students' TOEFL tests. From the result of the t-test, it can be seen that there was a significant difference in students' TOEFL scores after the TOEFL preparation course was carried out.

DISCUSSION

From the data analysis, it can be stated that each instrument used for the pre-test and post-test has a normal distribution. The researcher has done the normality test using Shapiro-Wilk due to the small number of participants. The normality test showed that students' pre-test results were $.013 > .05$ and students' post-test results were $.011 > .05$, which, if Sig. is higher than $.05$, means that the data has a normal distribution. In addition, the result of this research stated that the TOEFL preparation class effectively increases students' TOEFL scores. This is approved by the different mean results, in which the participants' pre-test mean 413.33, and the post-test mean was 438.36. Furthermore, it could be proved by the significant difference between students' pre-test and post-test. The research used a t-test, in which the result was the p-value or Sig. (2-tailed) $< .05$ or $.000 < .05$, which means that there is a significant difference in students' TOEFL scores after the TOEFL preparation course was carried out.

This result is the same as the result of the previous studies by Djamereng (2021). The Sig two-tailed values are $0,000 < 0.025$. It means there were differences in the values before and after learning, which the TOEFL preparation program can improve students' scores. Moreover, this research resulted in the same as Suryani's (2021), which stated that the TOEFL preparation program conducted online had a significant effect on students' TOEFL scores where the result stated that the Sig value. (2-tailed) was $0.008 < 0.05$. It means there was a significant effect on students' TOEFL scores after they got TOEFL preparation online as the treatment.

CONCLUSIONS

The finding of this result showed that the TOEFL preparation test has a significant effect on increasing students' TOEFL scores. This was proven by the T-test result, which is p-value or Sig. (2-tailed) $< .05$ or $.000 < .05$. It means that H_0 was rejected and H_a was accepted; in other words, there was a significant difference between participants' pre-test and post-test scores. This proved that students must be more prepared before the final test to improve their TOEFL scores.

From this research, the researcher suggested that TOEFL preparation courses should be conducted for a longer duration, not only 90 minutes for each meeting, since it is proven to positively affect students' TOEFL scores. This statement is supported by Masfukah (2018), an undergraduate student who

suggested that the TOEFL preparation course should be held for 120 minutes in a meeting. It is expected that take a longer duration in a meeting. The result would even be a lot better.

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