

An Analysis on Students' Ability in TOEFL Structure Section Tests of Sixth Semester at Batanghari University Academic Year 2016/2017

Asma Ariska; Wennyta; Nurul Fitri

**English Education Study Program, Faculty of Teachers Training and Education,
Batanghari University**

Abstract

The aim of this research is to know the students' ability in TOEFL Structure Section tests of sixth semester at Batanghari University Academic Year 2016/2017. The sample of this research are 20 students sixth semester at Batanghari University which consist of two classes, regular A and B. The design of this research is descriptive method because the researcher just analysis the students' ability in TOEFL Structure Section test. Based on the data analysis, the sixth semester students of English Education Study Program attained 60% which belong to fair category in Structure and Written Expression part. Based on the result of the research and the discussions that have been previously discussed in chapter IV, it can be concluded that the students' ability in TOEFL Structure Section tests of sixth semester of English Education Study Program at Batanghari University was 60%, it belong to fair category.

Keywords: *Students' Ability, TOEFL Structure Section Tests*

Introduction

English Grammar, as one of the English components, is very important in learning a language. When the students master the English structure well, they will be able to construct correct sentences and to communicate effectively. Moreover, without adequate grammar knowledge, learners' language development will be severely constrained (Suseno and Setyawan, 2014). Grammar is a formal instrument which uses a finite numbers of rules enabling language user to construct sentences of a language (Harley, 2001). In line with this, (Greenbaum and Nelson, 2002) state that grammar is the center component of language, and it contains the set of rules which enables us to combine words into larger units.

EFL learners should comprehend the grammar although it is a little bit complicated because each language has different rules of the grammar. Without grammar, it will be hard to produce a clear communication. The learners are required to have grammar ability which helps them to understand how text works. As in academic purpose which generally tend to writting skill, it needs to constructed well by mastering grammar.

Grammar skill also can be found in Structure and Written Expression section of TOEFL-PBT test, that designed to evaluate the proficiency of English learners. It is develop to be the standard of English proficiency for all English native speakers in the United States. Nowadays, TOEFL is used to be the standard of English proficiency for

English non-native speakers, including Indonesian (Mayuasti, 2013). The first TOEFL test was developed in the USA under the auspices of the National Council on the Testing of English as a Foreign Language. The council consisted of 30 public and private institutions preoccupied with the question of the English language proficiency of non-native speakers, particularly those who apply to study at an educational institution where English is the primary medium of communication (Nikolaieva, 2016).

The researcher chooses this research because the researcher wants to know the students' ability in TOEFL Structure Section tests of sixth semester at Batanghari University Academic Year 2016/2017. Moreover, the researcher wants to acquaint to the students how is TOEFL test, so the students already have an idea about TOEFL test later.

The content of TOEFL Structure Section is similar with the grammar subject that have been learned start from first to fourth semester students in English Education Study Program of Batanghari University. Based on my first observation, I found that the students did not understand how TOEFL Structure Section test, because the students never did TOEFL test before.

Considering the situation above, the researcher conducts a research on the students' ability in TOEFL Structure Section tests of sixth semester at Batanghari University Academic Year 2016/2017. This research is conducting to analyze the students' ability to face the TOEFL test or conduct an article and other academic writing.

To achieve the purpose of this research, the researcher provides the following research question: "How is

the students' ability in TOEFL Structure Section tests of sixth semester at Batanghari University Academic Year 2016/2017?"

This research takes place in Batanghari University. The students are given the TOEFL test of Structure Section. The participant of this research is the sixth semester students of English Education Study Program. This research is focused on the student at least have been finishing fourth semester grade because the syllabus first to fourth semester in English Education Study Program of Batanghari University was learned about grammar subject.

Concept of Students' Ability in TOEFL

Ability is the power to perform an action. Every individual has different capabilities in action. This affects ability the potential that exists within the individual. The learning process requires students to optimize all the skills possessed (Akhmad Sudrajat, 2008).

Students' Ability is the capacity of an individual's competence on doing some activity. The ability of the student in doing something is the most important thing to accomplish specific task (Robbins, 2007). Students' ability is student's capability in doing something well by using knowledge and skill or something that people do very well because they have learned and practised. The quality of being able to do something or act physically, mentally, financially, morally or legal to accomplish something. So, the students' ability affects the score or value that obtained by students in TOEFL, especially in TOEFL Structure Section test.

Concept of English Grammar

There are many definition about grammar. In linguistics, grammar is study of such rules, and this field includes morphology, syntax, phonology, semantics, and pragmatics. Grammar is also defined as the basis of the unlimited expressibility of human language (Komarova, 2001). The term refers also to a set of rules which tells us how to recognise the infinite number of expressions that constitute the language that we speak (Newson, 2006).

Aritonang (2014) defines grammar as the study of words and their function. In its wider sense it may conclude phonology (pronunciation), morphology (inflectional forms), syntax (the relation of words to other words in phrases, clauses, and sentences), and semantics (meaning of words). In its narrower sense it may deal only with the forms and with the uses of words. Since grammar is a science, it must describe and analyze the basic parts of speech, and explain and interpret the laws governing the behavior of language.

There are two kinds of grammar known in nowadays, Descriptive grammar and Prescriptive grammar. Descriptive grammar refers to the structure of a language that used by speakers and writers. Prescriptive grammar is the structure of a language that some people think it should be used (Rudi, 2014).

These kinds of grammar are concerned with rules, but in different ways. Descriptive grammar concerned with rules or patterns that underlie our use of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences. On the other hand, Prescriptive grammar concerned with rules about what we believe to be the

“correct” or “incorrect” use of language.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher concluded that grammar is a set of rules that explain how words are used in a language and how words change their form and combine with other words to make sentences.

Concept of TOEFL

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is a test of English proficiency. TOEFL evaluates the ability of an individual to use and understand English in an academic setting. The test is designed and administered by Educational Testing Services (ETS) within the U.S. and outside. Usually the TOEFL test is taken by candidates' whose native language is other than English. A TOEFL test measures the ability of a candidate to read, write and speak English (Ramsey, 2014).

There are many kind functions of TOEFL start from study further-in this case for non-native speaker to determine academic readiness and make admission decision for international applicant, individual who are applying for professional licensure or certification, and also for some goverment, licensing, and certification agencies, as well as exchange and scholarship programmes also use the TOEFL scores a decision tool (Susanti, 2014).

In a previous study about TOEFL (Susanti, 2014) stated that, It is a fact that when a person possesses a desirable of English proficiency, he or she has a better opportunity for job hunting, promotion, high salaries, and school admission. Since in Indonesia most Universities and Institutions required sort of sertification in English, a high level of proviciency should be

established as a graduation requirement. This phenomenon leads to more widely used of standardized test such as TOEFL.

Since its introduction in 1964, the TOEFL test has changed its format several times: it started as a Paper-Based Test (TOEFL PBT), then evolved into the Computer-Based format (TOEFL CBT), and finally in 2005 it transformed into the Internet-Based version (TOEFL IBT). In addition, the ETS offers two more test formats. These are the TOEFL ITP (Institutional Testing Program), created by institutions for internal use only to identify the proficiency level of their students and the TOEFL Junior test, an assessment of middle school-level English language proficiency intended for 11-14 year-old students (Nikolaieva, 2016). As this far, Structure and Written Expression section which relate to Grammar also include in TOEFL- PBT. The researcher use TOEFL-PBT test in this research.

From the explanation above, the researcher concluded that the purpose of TOEFL test is indicating English proficiency of a person to colleges and university (primarily in U.S. and Canada) and to government and other agencies for placement of students in universities.

TOEFL Structure Sections

According to Phillips (2001:195), on the paper TOEFL test, the second section is called Structure and Written Expression. This section consists of forty questions (though some tests may be longer). You have twenty-five minutes to complete the forty questions in this section. There are two types of questions in the Structure and Written

Expression section of the paper TOEFL test:

1. Structure (questions 1-15) consists of fifteen sentences in which part of each sentence has been replaced with a blank. Each sentence is followed by four answer choices. Choose the answer that completes the sentence in a grammatically correct way.
2. Written Expression (questions 16-40) consists of twenty-five sentences in which four words or groups of words have been underlined. Choose the underlined word or group of words that is not correct.

These two kind of questions contain many common type of problems that participant will encounter in Structure Section of the TOEFL test. In this research, the researcher analyzes the students' ability related to the skills in the grammar subject which was studied in fourth semester grade.

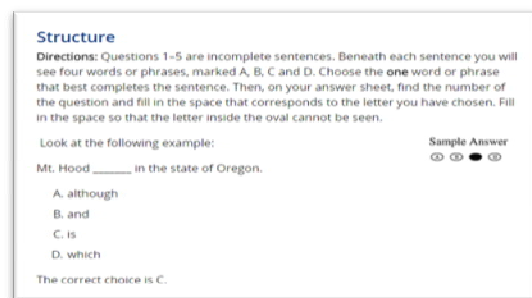


Figure 2.3.1: Structure Question

https://www.ets.org/toefl_itp/content/sample_questions/pre_toefl_section2

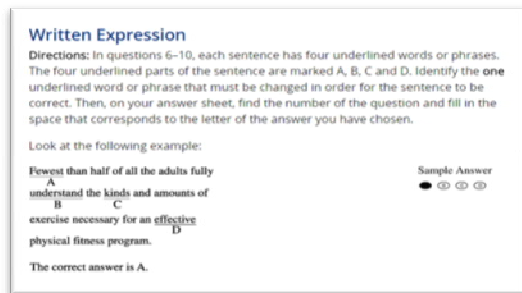


Figure 2.3.1: Written Expression Question
https://www.ets.org/toefl_itp/content/sample_questions/pre_toefl_section2

Content of Structure Sections in TOEFL

In the EFL teaching and learning, the term “structure” is refers to the sentence patterns. Sometimes, Structure is interchangeably used with the grammar (Suwartono, 2014). During TOEFL test as examples, grammar as well used in structure part of the test when the words should be formed correctly. The test takers or participants must decided what things are needed to make a correct sentence, whether it has a correct subject and verb, the object of preposition, the form of tenses, conjunctions, clauses, or even the connectors.

The total rules/skills are adapted from *Longman Complete Course for the TOEFL test* book (Phillips, 2001).

Research Methodology

Descriptive research play an important role in educational research, and thus it is essential to understand the nature and function of such research. Descriptive research does not fit neatly into the definition of either quantitative or qualitative research methodologies, but instead it can utilize elements of both, often within the same study. The term descriptive research refers to the type of research questions, design, and data analysis that will be applied to a

given topic (Knupfer & McLellan, 1996). Descriptive research involves gathering data that describe events and then organizes, tabulates, depicts, and describes the data collection (Glass and Hopkins, 1984).

This research uses descriptive method because the researcher just analysis the students’ ability in TOEFL Structure Section tests of sixth semester in English Education Study Program at Batanghari University. In this research, the researcher just focus counting the mean and the percentage result of the students’ score. Descriptive method involves collection of data in order to test hypothesis or to answer questions concerning the current status of the subject of the study (Gay, 1976).

The aim of descriptive method is to describe the nature of situation as it exist at the time of the study and to explore the causes of particular phenomena (Travers, 1978).

Population and Sample

A population is a group of elements or cases, whether individuals, objects, or events, that conform to specific criteria and to which we intend to generalize the result of the research (McMillan, 1996). The population of this research is the sixth semester students of English Education Study Program at Batanghari University academic year 2016/2017.

The number of population are 20 students which consist of two classes; 10 students of reguler A dan 10 students of regular B. The researcher takes the sixth semester students as a sample, because they are more accessible and they have learned Grammar.

Table 1
The Description of the Population

Reguler	Class A	10
	Class B	10
Total of Population		20

The researcher takes random sampling as the technique for sampling in this research. This may be the most important type of sample. A random sample allows a known probability that each elementary unit will be chosen. There is some types of random samples but the researcher uses a simple random sample. A simple random sample is obtained by choosing elementary unit in search a way that each unit in the population has an equal chance of being selected (Fridah, 2002).

The instrument that uses in this research is based on TOEFL in Structure Section. TOEFL in Structure Section contains two parts of question, Structure and Written Expression. The time that take for the test are 25 minutes to finish all 40 questions. The test that takes for this research is adapted from Longman Complete Course for the TOEFL Test: Preparation for the Computer and Paper Test Book. The researcher gives test to the student cooperate with volunteer to avoid cheating. The researcher also gives space between student chairs to each other in term of create comfortable atmosphere during the test and also to avoid cheating.

Test Specification

There are 40 questions divided by 2 parts of question, 15 Structure questions and 25 Written Expression questions. The time that take for the test are 25 minutes to finish all 40 questions based on the real TOEFL Structure Section. The items divided

into 2 parts with different dirrections: First dirrection:

“**Directions:** Questions 1–15 are incomplete sentences. Choose and mark (X) for the **one** word or phrase that best completes the sentence. Then, on your answer sheet, find the number of the question and fill in the space that corresponds to the letter of the answer you have chosen”.

Table 2
The Specification of the Structure Items

Question Number	Question Skills
Question 1	Appositive
Question 2	Subject & verb
Question 3	Paired conjunction
Question 4	Subject & verb
Question 5	Coordinate connector
Question 6	Coordinate connector
Question 7	Object of preposition
Question 8	Countable noun
Question 9	Passive verb

Question 10	Paired conjunction
Question 11	Appositive
Question 12	Past participle
Question 13	Adjective clause connector
Question 14	About paired conjunction
Question 15	Adjective clouse connector

Question 19	Problem with noun
Question 20	Superlative degree
Question 21	Coordinate connector
Question 22	To infinitive
Question 23	Possessive pronoun
Question 24	Problem with noun
Question 25	Adjective
Question 26	Passive sentence
Question 27	Paired conjunction
Question 28	Comperative degree
Question 29	Subject/verb agreement
Question 30	Pronoun reference
Question 31	Adjective clause connector
Question 32	Countable noun
Question 33	Adjective clause
Question	Object of preposition

Second direction:

“Directions: In questions 16–40, each sentence has four underlined words or phrases. The four underlined parts of the sentence are marked A, B, C and D. Identify the **one** underlined word or phrase that must be changed in order for the sentence to be correct. Then, mark (X) the best answer on your answer sheet.”

Table 3
The specification of the written expression items

Question Number	Question Skills
Question 16	Subject and verb
Question 17	Problem with noun
Question 18	Subject and verb

34	
Question 35	Object of preposition
Question 36	Adjective clause connector
Question 37	Object of preposition
Question 38	Subject and verb
Question 39	Adjective
Question 40	Past participle

Procedure of Scoring

To know students' ability on TOEFL test in Structure and Written Expressions, the following procedure use:

$$x = \frac{R}{S} \times 100$$

(Nurgiyantoro, 1988)

In which :

X = the ultimate result of the students' score

R = the correct answer

S = the number of test item

To know students' ability in mastering English TOEFL Structure, the following procedure use:

Table 4
The Percentage Assessment of the Five Categories

The interval of Percentage of ability	Categories
85% – 100%	Very Good
75% – 84%	Good
60% – 74%	Fair
40% – 59%	Weak
0% – 39%	Poor

(Nurgiyantoro, 1988)

The procedure above use in the frequency distribution of the test result that will be gained by the students.

Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability are the two most important psychometric properties to consider in using a test or assessment procedure (Johnson and Christensen, P. 145). The validity of this research is based on the assessment that refers to the TOEFL test, so the format that uses similar to the format of the assessment on the TOEFL test. Reliability refers to consistency or stability of a set of test scores. Because the assessment that uses based on Longman Complete Course for the TOEFL Test: Preparation for the Computer and Paper Test book. The test is based on the background of the participants then the test always be consistent.

Technique of Data Analysis

In this research, the technique that researcher uses to conduct the data was descriptive statistics through the following steps:

- a. Firstly, the researcher gives the points in the worksheet to know the student's score.
- b. After that, the researcher counts the total number of student's score from the worksheet, then the researcher is counting the mean of student's scores by using formula:

$$mean = \frac{\sum X}{N}$$

M = the mean of the students' score

X = the total score of the students

N = the total number of the students

(Johnson & Christensen, 2008)

- c. After that, the researcher counts the student's score into percentage by using the formula:

$$P = \frac{\sum X}{N \times 100} \times 100\%$$

P = the percentage of the students

$\sum X$ = the total score of the students

N = the total number of the students

(Johnson & Christensen, 2008)

- d. Then, the researcher uses interval to see the student's ability in TOEFL, the result of percentage categorized into five stages that based on the table 3.4.
- e. To know which skill in this test is the most difficult to use by the students, the researcher counts the total number of

correct answer that given by the students in each skill of questions.

- f. Then, it put into percentage above by using the formula as follows:

$$p = \frac{ts}{tn} \times 100\%$$

p = the percentage of the student's ability per skill correctly

ts = the total frequency correct made of the students of each skill

tn = the total number of the students

(Johnson & Christensen, 2008)

Findings

This research was provided an accurate description related to Students' Ability in TOEFL Structure Section. In this chapter, the researcher explains the finding for research question namely how is the Students' Ability in TOEFL Structure Section. Based on the findings that have been analyzed through the score that were gained by the participants, it can be seen in the following table.

Table 5
Students Score Criterion of TOEFL Structure and Written Expression

Score	Interpretation Level	Number of Students
85% -100%	Very Good	-
75% - 84%	Good	4
60% -74%	Fair	7

40% - 59%	Weak	9
0% - 39%	Poor	-
TOTAL		20

(Nurgiantoro, 1988)

From the table above, it can be obviously seen that from 20 students, there are 4 students who attained the good score criterion, 7 students who attained the fair score criterion, 9 students who attained the weak score criterion

Based on the explanation above, the researcher figured out that 16 of 20 students who gained score lower than good score criterion on TOEFL Structure and Written Expression section and 4 of 20 students who attained the good score criterion with the achievement score above 75%.

Conclusions and Suggestions

Based on the data analysis discussed in the previous chapter, the researcher concluded that the sixth semester students in English Education Study Program at Batanghari University need more comprehension on TOEFL Structure Section. The data result showed that the ability of students in TOEFL Structure Section was 60%. So, the ability of sixth semester students of the English Education Study Program at Batanghari University belonged into fair category. It showed in the findings that 4 students who attained the good score criterion from total 20 participants, 7 students who attained the fair score criterion from total 20 participants, and 9 students who attained the weak score criterion from total 20 participants. The researcher figured out that 16 of 20 students who gained score lower than

good score criterion on TOEFL Structure and Written Expression section and 4 of 20 students who attained the good score criterion with the achievement score above 75%.

Based on the data analysis, the student's ability in Structure and Written Expression part had percentage 60%, so the students' ability in Structure and Written Expression part was belonged into fair category. It means that students sixth semester in English Education Study Program at Batanghari University have the same ability or knowledge in Structure and Written Expression part.

Based on the result of the test that given to 20 students of sixth semester students in English Education Study Program of Batanghari University, the average score was 60%. The highest score was 82 with the total of correct answer 33 gained by 3 students, and the lowest score was 40 with the total of correct answer 16 gained by 1 student.

Based on the data analysis, the lowest skills in this test were appositive in item number 11 and past participle in item number 40 with the average of students correct answer was 25%. Firstly, In the item number in the item number 11, there was a sentence losing the appositive. The correct answer was (C) "opposing presidents". So, the sentence "opposing presidents of the Union and the Confederacy during the Civil War" was not subject but explanation sentence of the previous subject. This explanation sentence usually called appositive. From 20 students, only 5 students who answered correctly and almost all of them answered (A) "they were opposing presidents". The students did lot of error in item number 11 maybe because they thought before the sentence "they were opposing presidents", must explained the subject of the previous

sentence (Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis). Then, in the item number 40, the correct answer was (C) because the word “observing” should be “observation”. From 20 students, only 5 students who answered correctly and almost all of them answered (A) “accounts”. The students did lot of error in item number 11 maybe because they thought the word “accounts” should be “account”. Actually, the word “accounts” was the right word because the subject (Newtonian Physics) and the verb (accounts) were equal. The item number 40 is the last question in this test, the student became tired in doing 40 question on 25 minutes. So the student lost their focus on the test.

Then the highest skills in this test were subject and verb in item number 2, paired conjunction in item number 14, object of preposition in item number 35, and adjective clause connector in item number 36 with the average of student correct answer was 90%. Firstly, in the item number 2, there was a subject but losing the verb. The correct answer was (D) “are two”. The answer (C) was the wrong answer because there was not a verb, then the answer (A) and (B) were the wrong answer because there were subject although they have verb “are”. From 20 students, only 2 students who answered incorrectly. The question in this item is a simple question. But it can make the students confused if the students did not answer carefully. Then, in the item number 14, the correct answer was (C) “does a nuclear breeder reactor”. The parallel structure in paired conjunction: “not only . . . but also”. In the sentence, there was clause in “but also”, so need clause to “not only”. In clause “not only” there was a verb (generate) so need a subject. Automatically, the answer (B) and (D) were the wrong

answer. From 20 students, only 2 students who answered incorrectly. Next, in the item number 35, it was about incorrect preposition. In the item number 35, the correct answer was (C) because the word “of least” (thirty-seven other residences) should be “at least” (thirty-seven other residences). From 20 students, only 2 students who answered incorrectly. Last, in the item number 36, the correct answer was (C) because the word “consumes” should be “consume”. Bacteria was the plural of bacterium. This item is a simple question, the students need to comprehend the adjective clause connector more to answer the question correctly in the future test.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher concluded that the sixth semester students in English Education Study Program at Batanghari University included in fair criterion with the average score 60%. It means that student sixth semester in English Education Study Program at Batanghari University need more comprehension in Structure Section in TOEFL test.

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