

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF STRUCTURE AND WRITTEN EXPRESSIONS COMPREHENSION IN TOEFL

Paskalina Widiastuti Ratnaningsih¹

Abstract

English test is needed to measure students' comprehension on the material. There are several types of English tests. One of English tests for international use is TOEFL. TOEFL is used by many individuals to measure their abilities of English. This study would like to analyze students' perceptions of Structure and Written Expression skills that are difficult and moderate to be learned. This study used survey research. It was conducted in a university where the sample was semester 7 students. This study used questionnaire as the instrument. The result showed that most of the respondents understood the material. However, several skills which were conjunctions, connectors, present and past participles, adjective and adverb, adjective after linking verbs were mostly difficult to be learned.

Keywords: Structure, TOEFL, analysis, university, English learning

Abstrak

Tes bahasa Inggris diperlukan untuk mengukur pemahaman siswa pada materi. Ada beberapa jenis tes bahasa Inggris. Salah satu tes bahasa Inggris untuk penggunaan internasional adalah TOEFL. TOEFL digunakan oleh banyak individu untuk mengukur kemampuan bahasa Inggris mereka. Penelitian ini ingin menganalisis persepsi siswa tentang keterampilan Structure and Written Expression yang sulit dan sedang untuk dipelajari. Penelitian ini menggunakan penelitian survei. Penelitian ini dilakukan di sebuah perguruan tinggi yang sampelnya adalah mahasiswa semester 7. Penelitian ini menggunakan kuesioner sebagai instrumennya. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar responden memahami materi. Namun, beberapa keterampilan yang merupakan kata sambung, penghubung, partisip sekarang dan lampau, kata sifat dan kata keterangan, kata sifat setelah menghubungkan kata kerja sebagian besar sulit dipelajari.

Kata kunci: struktur, TOEFL, analisis, universitas, pembelajaran bahasa Inggris

¹ Universitas Dinamika Bangsa, Email: paskalina.widiastuti@unama.ac.id

INTRODUCTION

English is an international language. English is used in many sectors including education, business, and other areas. English mastery is needed in this era. People who have good English have more chance in several aspects, such as jobs, scholarships, and others. English is spoken in different continent and countries, whether as mother tongue, second language, or foreign language.

When English is as foreign language, it is used in formal institutions, for example school and university. Other than in the countries where English is used as first language, international English language testing is needed to measure English competence of each individual. Adam and Magfirah (2021) stated that TOEFL is used to measure English abilities in university.

There are several English language tests, namely TOEFL (Test of English as Foreign Language), IELTS (International English Language Testing System), TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication). TOEFL is used to measure Listening, Structure, and Reading (Hampp, Lengkoan, and Kumayas 2021). The test is started with listening, followed by Structure, and the last is reading. The test is in the form of multiple choice. Listening consists of 50 questions. Structure consists of 40 questions. Reading consists of 50 questions.

This study is focused in Structure and Written Expressions. In TOEFL Preparation, there are several skills that need to be learned in order to be able to do Structure and Written Expression well. This study would like to analyze students' comprehension in learning Structure Skills. Structure consists of several skills to be learned. Gamon et al in Yosintha, Yuniarti, and Ramadhika (2021) stated that "Common errors made by TOEFL takers are violating the rules of syntax (such as subject-verb agreement), ill-formed modal verbs,

determiner-noun agreements, verbs with their nominal form, pronoun uses, missing commas, and apostrophes".

There are several TOEFL Structure and Written Expressions. Based on Phillips (2004), there are 25 Structure and Written Expressions skills that are learned in TOEFL. Those 25 skills are Subjects and Verbs, Objects of Preposition, Present Participle, Past Participle, Coordinate Connectors, Adverb Clause Connectors, Noun Clause Connectors, Noun Clause Connectors/Subjects, Adjective Clause Connectors, Adjective Clause Connectors/Subjects, Agreement after Preposition Phrases, Agreement after Expression of Quantity, Agreement after Certain Words, Parallel Structure with Coordinate Conjunctions, Parallel Structure with Paired Conjunctions, Past Participle after Have, Present Participle or Past Participle after Be, Base Form after Modals, Singular and Plural Nouns, Countable and Uncountable Nouns, Subject and Object Pronoun, Possessives, Pronoun Reference, Adjectives and Adverbs, and Adjective after Linking Verbs.

There are several previous studies. Firstly, Tanihardjo (2016) had done research on analysis of grammar section in the paper-based TOEFL. This study used pre-test and post-test to find frequent mistake. Secondly, Handayani (2019) conducted the research on difficulties of structure and written expression in TOEFL. It used test and interview. Thirdly, Tangkelangi (2020) did research on students' competence in TOEFL structure and written expression. It used adopted test. The result was there were several items that were difficult. Fourthly, Putra, Lubis, and Siregar (2020) did a research on difficulties of structure and written expression in TOEFL. It used test and the results showed different difficulties of structure. Fifthly, Akmal et al. (2020) had done research on learners' difficulties in structure and written

expression. It used test. The difficulties were determiners, conjunctions, adjective clauses, apposition phrases, reduced clauses, adverb connectors, subject-verb agreement, and clause of concession, relative clause, and quantifier. Sixthly, Hampp, Lengkoan, and Kumayas (2021) did a research on problems faced in TOEFL Structure and Written Expression. It used questionnaire and interview and focused on general problems. Seventhly, Yosintha, Yuniati, and Ramadhika (2021) did a case study on linguistic constraint in Structure and Written Expression in TOEFL. From the studies of TOEFL structure and written expression conducted in the past six years, the studies focused more on discovering difficulties in learning TOEFL structure and written expressions seen from the test and one study used questionnaire to find general problems. There was no study that focused on discovering students' perceptions of TOEFL structure and written expressions comprehension of each skill in the form of questionnaire. Hence, this study would like to explore this part.

The research question of this study is What are students' perceptions of comprehension in learning TOEFL Structure and Written Expression skills? The purpose of this study is to discover students' perceptions of comprehension in learning TOEFL Structure and Written Expression skills. This study would like to give practical contribution in teaching and learning of TOEFL Structure and Written Expressions skills.

METHOD

This study was survey research. The survey research is quantitative research by using survey for a sample or population to discover opinions, behaviours, or characteristics (Creswell 2012).

The instrument was questionnaire. A questionnaire is a form that the respondents filled and gave it back to the researcher

(Creswell 2012). The use of questionnaire was aimed to analyze students' perceptions of comprehension in Structure and Written Expression skills. The questionnaire consisted of open-ended questionnaire and closed-ended questionnaire. Closed-ended questionnaire consisted of 25 statements. Open-ended questionnaire consisted of 5 questions.

The respondents in this study were four TOEFL Preparation classes in which there were 137 students of semester 7 students in a university. Those 137 students were in 4 classes of TOEFL.

The closed-ended questionnaire was analyzed by using percentage. The open-ended questionnaire was analyzed by clustering the same answers.

RESEARCH FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Research Finding

The table below shows the results of closed-ended questionnaire in the form of percentage.

N o.	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
1	I can understand material on Subject and Verbs.	0,00 %	2,19 %	19,71 %	57,66 %	20,44 %
2	I can understand material on Objects of Preposition.	0,00 %	3,65 %	23,36 %	60,58 %	12,41 %
3	I can understand material on Present Participle.	0,73 %	4,38 %	26,28 %	55,47 %	13,14 %
4	I can understand material on Past Participle.	0,73 %	5,84 %	38,69 %	44,53 %	10,22 %
5	I can understand material on Coordinate Connectors.	0,73 %	10,95 %	19,71 %	45,26 %	23,36 %
6	I can understand material on Adverb Clause.	0,00 %	14,60 %	23,36 %	46,72 %	15,33 %

7	I can understand material on Noun Clause Connectors.	0,00 %	13,87 %	29,93 %	43,07 %	13,14 %
8	I can understand material on Noun Clause Connectors/Subjects.	0,00 %	11,68 %	31,39 %	47,45 %	9,49 %
9	I can understand material on Adjective Clause Connectors.	0,73 %	9,49 %	32,85 %	44,53 %	12,41 %
10	I can understand material on Adjective Clause Connectors/Subjects.	0,73 %	11,68 %	34,31 %	45,26 %	8,03 %
11	I can understand material on Agreement after Preposition Phrases.	0,00 %	15,33 %	32,12 %	39,42 %	13,14 %
12	I can understand material on Agreement after Expression of Quantity.	1,46 %	11,68 %	34,31 %	42,34 %	10,22 %
13	I can understand material on Agreement after Certain Words.	0,00 %	12,41 %	31,39 %	48,18 %	8,03 %
14	I can understand material on Parallel Structure with Coordinate Conjunctions.	0,73 %	15,33 %	35,77 %	40,88 %	7,30 %
15	I can understand material on Parallel Structure with Paired Conjunctions.	0,00 %	14,60 %	31,39 %	45,99 %	8,03 %
16	I can understand material on Present Participle after Have.	0,00 %	10,22 %	27,74 %	53,28 %	8,76 %
17	I can understand material on Present Participle or	0,00 %	12,41 %	35,77 %	42,34 %	9,49 %

	Past Participle after Be.					
18	I can understand material on Base form after Modals.	0,73 %	15,33 %	31,39 %	39,42 %	13,14 %
19	I can understand material on Singular and Plural Nouns.	1,46 %	8,76 %	24,09 %	48,91 %	16,79 %
20	I can understand material on Countable and Uncountable Noun.	0,00 %	8,76 %	22,63 %	54,74 %	13,87 %
21	I can understand material on Subject & Object Pronoun.	0,00 %	8,03 %	22,63 %	52,55 %	16,79 %
22	I can understand material on Possessives.	0,00 %	7,30 %	28,47 %	49,64 %	14,60 %
23	I can understand material on Pronoun Reference.	2,19 %	13,14 %	38,69 %	37,96 %	8,03 %
24	I can understand material on Adjectives and Adverbs.	1,46 %	14,60 %	43,80 %	34,31 %	5,84 %
25	I can understand material on Adjectives after Linking Verbs.	1,46 %	22,63 %	40,15 %	29,20 %	6,57 %

Based on the data above, most of the respondents stated that the first statement was mostly agree (57.66%) in which most respondents agree that they could understand material on Subject and Verbs. In the second statement, most respondents agreed (60,58%) that they could understand material on Objects of Preposition. In the third statement, most respondents agreed (55,47%) that they could understand material on Present Participle. In the fourth statement, most respondents agreed (44,53%) that they could understand material on Past Participle. In the fifth statement, most respondents agreed (45,26%) that they could understand material on Coordinate Connectors. In the

sixth statement, most respondents agreed (46,72%) that they could understand material on Adverb Clause. In the seventh statement, most respondents agreed (43,07%) that they could understand material on Noun Clause Connectors. In the eighth statement, most respondents agreed (47,45%) that they could understand material on Noun Clause Connectors/Subjects. In the ninth statement, most respondents agreed (44,53%) that they could understand material on Adjective Clause Connectors. In the tenth statement, most respondents agreed (45,26%) that they could understand material on Adjective Clause Connectors/Subjects. In the eleventh statement, most respondents agreed (39,42%) that they could understand material on Agreement after Preposition Phrases. In the twelfth statement, most respondents agreed (42,34%) that they could understand material on Agreement after Expression of Quantity. In the thirteenth statement, most respondents agree (48,18%) that they could understand material on Agreement after Certain Words. In the fourteenth statement, most respondents agreed (40,88%) that they could understand material on Parallel Structure with Coordinate Conjunctions. In the fifteenth statement, most respondents agreed (40,88%) that they could understand material on Parallel Structure with Paired Conjunctions. In the sixteenth statement, most respondents agreed (53,28%) that they could understand material on Present Participle after Have. In the seventeenth statement, most respondents agreed (42,34%) that they could understand material on Present Participle or Past Participle after Be. In the eighteenth statement, most respondents agreed (39,42%) that they could understand material on Base form after Modals. In the nineteenth statement, most respondents agreed (48,91%) that they could understand material on Singular and Plural Nouns. In

the twentieth statement, most respondents agreed (54,74%) that they could understand material on Countable and Uncountable Noun. In the twenty-first statement, most respondents agreed (52,55%) that they could understand material on Subject & Object Pronoun. In the twenty-second statement, most respondents agreed (49,64%) that they could understand material on Possessives. However, most students found difficulties in skill 23, skill 24, and skill 25. In the twenty-third statement, most respondents were neutral (38,69%) that they could understand material on Pronoun Reference. In the twenty-fourth statement, most respondents were neutral (43,80%) that they could understand material on Adjectives and Adverbs. In the twenty-fifth statement, most respondents were neutral (40,15%) that they could understand material on Adjectives after Linking Verbs.

Based on the results of Open-Ended Questions, the most difficult Structure and Written Expressions were Connectors, Conjunctions, Present and Past Participles, Adjective and Adverbs, Adjectives after Linking Verbs. The reasons that those skills are difficult because they thought that it was hard to find and differentiate connectors, conjunctions, present and past participles. They also thought that it was difficult to differentiate adjectives and adverbs, and also adjectives after linking verbs. They overcame those difficulties by learning independently, asking other friends, and finding materials from internet. Based on English learning background, most of them learned English from Elementary School, while they learned English grammar for the first time was mostly from Junior High School.

Discussion

Based on the results of closed-ended questionnaire above, most of the students could understand Structure and Written Expressions from skill 1 until skill 22.

However, most of them found difficulties in skill 23 (Pronoun Reference), skill 24 (Adjectives and Adverbs), skill 25 (Adjectives after Linking Verbs).

Based on the results of open-ended questionnaire above, the range of difficulties of learning structure and written expression spread and supported by their reasons why certain skills were difficult to be learned (Connectors, Conjunctions, Present and Past Participles, Adjective and Adverbs, Adjectives after Linking Verbs). However, the students tried to overcome their problems by using several ways.

When it was combined both the results of closed-ended questionnaire and open-ended questionnaire, there was similarity in which Adjectives and Adverbs and also Adjectives after Linking Verbs were difficult to be learned. In learning Present and Past Participles were also difficult in the result of open-ended questionnaire and although most respondents answered could understand in closed-ended questionnaire, some of them were neutral as the second highest results. It was also the same in learning Connectors and Conjunctions. It supported the study of Akmal et al. (2020) about the difficulties in learning TOEFL structure and written expressions.

When it was seen from their background, most of the students learned English from Elementary school and learned English grammar from Junior High School.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the results and discussions above, most of the respondents can understand structure and written expressions in TOEFL. However, there are certain skills that are difficult to be learned from their perspectives. They try hard to overcome those difficulties by learning continuously.

Future researchers can explore more about students' perceptions of

comprehension in listening or reading skills in TOEFL.

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