

A Study of Students' Difficulties in Structure and Written Expression on Paper- Based TOEFL

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Abstract: The aims of this study is to investigate student' difficulties in Structure and Written Expression on Paper-Based TOEFL. The subjects of this study were ten students of English Department STKIP Al Hikmah Surabaya. This study used qualitative research method. The researcher used TOEFL test and interview in collecting the data. The study found the most students' errors were from five item of TOEFL test, they were invert subject and verb. Multi clauses, reduced clause, form of the verb, and adjective and verb. This research also showed that the main factor causing students' difficulty in TOEFL was lack of grammar.

Keywords: *TOEFL Structure and Written Expression, Students' Difficulties*

INTRODUCTION

TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) is one of standardized test which is used to measure English proficiency for EFL students. This test is very important for student since the three sections of the test really facilitates the students to know their ability in understanding spoken English in listening section, mastering English structure in structure and written section, and understanding short English passages Zaidoon (2011). By taking this test, students will be able to know their English proficiency level

Structure and written expression is one of sections tested in TOEFL. This section tested in order to know the examinees' ability to identify English grammar sentences correctly. It involves an ability to choose the correct answer that completes the sentence and an ability to recognize underlined word or phrase that is not appropriate in the sentence Iskandar (2017).

For English department students of STKIP Al Hikmah, TOEFL becomes compulsory test taken as one of requirements to join thesis test. The students who want to register thesis test must have minimum 550 scores of TOEFL. They must have effective preparation before taking the test. TOEFL is also important for them for them to apply education scholarship. However, there are still many students of English department failed to get a good score in TOEFL test. From the result of the test taken, most students cannot reach 500 score. Although they come from English department, they still face difficulties in answering question in TOEFL. They are very good in making sentence using proper sentence, however they are not very good in answering TOEFL structure test. King and Stanley (2006) in their book state that an individual who studies English sentence structure and become skilful in speaking and listening but never become a competent writer is unlikely to make a good score on the Structure and Written Expression of TOEFL. Structure and written expression becomes the most difficult section for the students. There must be some factors why the students have many obstacles in the section. Therefore, on this study, the researcher is going to investigate students' difficulties in structure and written expression in TOEFL test.

LITERATURE REVIEW

TOEFL Test Structure and Written Expression

In TOEFL test, structure and written expression is one of the sections in measuring examinee's ability in recognizing appropriate language used in standard written English Xin Zhuang (2008). There are two parts on this section, part A and part B. The number of question in each part is 15 questions in part A, and 25 questions in part B. In part A, the type of the test is about completing a sentence. The examinees need to choose one correct option to complete the sentence. After finishing part A, the

examinees continue to do part B. The type of the test in part B is about written expression. This part has 25 sentences in which each sentence has four underlined words/phrases in the sentence. These four underlined words/phrases are marked (A), (B), (C), and (D). The examinees have to identify errors/mistakes from the underlined word/phrases to correct the sentence (Rizki, 2016).

Generally, there are five English aspects or skill tested in TOEFL (Deborah Phipps); (1) one clause sentence, (2) multiple clause sentence, (3) reduced clause sentence, (4) Inverted subject and verb sentence, and (5) comparative sentence. Most of the questions in this section generally require the examinees' ability in identifying the number of clause and determining what type of word is suitable for completing the sentence.

In written expression, on the other hand, there are twelve language components that the examinees mastered to be success in TOEFL test; (1) subject and verb agreement, (2) Parallel structure, (3) comparative and superlative, (4) form of the verb, (5) invert subject and verb, (6) singular and plural, (7) pronoun, (8) adjective and adverb, (9) articles, (10) noun, (11) preposition, (12) usage.

Factors Influencing Students Making Structure Mistakes

According to Richards (1971), there are two factors influencing students' mistakes in structure, they are inter-lingua errors, inter-lingua errors, and developmental errors. The followings are the explanation of those three factors:

- a. Inter-lingual errors: these errors are caused by mother tongue interference. These kinds of errors are influenced by the native languages which interfere with target language learning. In inter-lingual errors, some causes are:
 1. Transfer errors (the tendency of the students to follow and repeat what are said by the teacher when learning process occurred)
 2. Simplification (the students who want to make the sentences more simple but the structure is not grammatically correct)

- b. Intra-lingual and developmental errors: this kind of errors occurs during the learning process of the second language at a stage when the learners have not really acquired the knowledge. In addition, errors or mistakes are also caused by the difficulty or the problem of language itself. The errors or mistakes caused by the target language itself like:
1. False analogy,
 2. Misanalysis (learners form a wrong hypothesis),
 3. Incomplete rule application (this is the converse of overgeneralization or one might call it under generalization as the learners do not use all the rules),
 4. Exploiting redundancy (this error occurs by carrying considerable redundancy. This is shown throughout the system in the form of unnecessary morphology and double signaling), Overlooking co-occurrence restrictions (this error is caused by overlooking the exceptional rules),
 5. Hypercorrection or monitor overuse (this results from the learners' over cautious and strict observance of the rules),
 6. Overgeneralization or system-simplification (this error is caused by the misuse of words or grammatical rules)

METHODOLOGY

The research design on this study was descriptive research. The subjects of the research were ten students of English Department STKIP Al Hikmah Surabaya who took Intensive TOEFL class. The instruments on the research were test and interview guideline. The tests were Structure and written expression TOEFL test taken from Longman book. The test consisted of 15 questions of structure and 25 questions of written expression. This test is used as instrument to know the area of students' mistakes or difficulties in doing TOEFL Structure. The interview guideline was used on this study to find the reasons or causes behind the students' mistakes in the structure section TOEFL test.

Table 1: Errors Statistics in part A: Structure

No	Indicators	Sub Indicators	Questions Number
1	Structure	One clause sentence	1,2,3,9
		Multiple clauses sentence	4,6,7,8,10,11
		Reduce clause sentence	5,14
		Inverted subject and verb sentence	12,15
		Comparative	13
2	Written Expression	Subject and verb agreement	17,18,20
		Parallel Structure	19,21
		Comparative and Superlative	27
		Form of the verb	29,16,36
		Inverted subject and verb sentence	30
		Singular and plural	23,24
		Pronoun	25
		Adjective and Adverb	28,33,34,35
		Articles	37
		Noun	39,31
		Preposition	32,38
		Usage	22,26,40

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Students' Test result

To know the data about students' difficulties in doing TOEFL structure test, the researcher used a test taken from Longman TOEFL test preparation. In analyzing the data, the researcher divided the data into two categories; they are structure and written expression. The followings are the result of data analysis of English students' difficulties in the TOEFL structure.

Table 1: Errors Statistics in part A: Structure

Item No	Correct Answer	Percentage	Incorrect Answer	Percentage
1	9	90%	1	10%
2	8	80%	2	20%
3	5	50%	5	50%
4	7	70%	3	30%
5	5	50%	5	50%
6	6	60%	4	40%
7	7	70%	3	30%
8	4	40%	6	60%
9	9	90%	1	10%
10	5	50%	5	50%
11	7	70%	3	30%
12	6	60%	4	40%
13	7	70%	3	30%

14	6	60%	4	40%
15	3	30%	7	70%

The result of students' test in part A can be seen from table 1. From the table, we could see that the highest percentage of incorrect answers was in item number 15 (70%). we could also see that the second highest incorrect answer was in item no 8 (60%). Then it continued to the item number 3 and 5 (50%), item number 6, 12, and 14 (40%), item 4, 7, 13 (30%), and item 2 (20%). The lowest percentage the incorrect answer was in item 1 and 9 (10%).

Table 2: Errors Statistics in part B: Written Expression

Item No	Correct Answer	Percentage	Incorrect Answer	Percentage
16	10	100%	0	0%
17	10	100%	0	0%
18	9	90%	1	10%
19	8	80%	2	20%
20	10	100%	0	0%
21	8	80%	2	20%
22	6	60%	4	40%
23	6	60%	4	40%
24	8	80%	2	20%
25	7	70%	3	30%
26	6	60%	4	40%
27	7	70%	3	30%
28	6	60%	4	40%
29	5	50%	5	50%
30	4	40%	6	60%
31	5	50%	5	50%
32	7	70%	3	30%
33	8	80%	2	20%
34	6	60%	4	40%
35	5	50%	5	50%
36	9	90%	1	10%
37	6	60%	4	40%
38	6	60%	4	40%
39	8	80%	2	20%
40	6	60%	4	40%

Table 2 showed that the results of students' test in part B. From the table, we could see that the highest percentage of incorrect answers was in item number 30 (60%), then followed in item 29 and 25 (50%). The moderate percentages of students' incorrect answers were in item 22, 23, 26, 28, 34, 37, 38, and 40 (40%), in item 25, 27, and

32(30%). Finally, the lowest percentage of students' incorrect answers was in item number 16, 71, and 20 (0%).

Table 2: Statistics of the Highest Frequency of Error

Item No	Part	Types or Error	Frequency of Error	Percentage
15	A	Inverted subject and verb sentence	7/10	70%
8	A	Multiple clauses sentence	6/10	60%
30	B	Inverted subject and verb sentence	6/10	60%
5	A	Reduce clause sentence	5/10	50%
29	B	Form of the verb	5/10	50%
35	B	Adjective and Adverb	5/10	50%

Table 2 showed that the results of the highest frequency students' errors in the structure and written expression section. There were 6 items indicated as the most difficult items in structure and written expression test. The followings are the explanation for the items.

Inverted Subject and Verb

Inverted subject and verb became the most difficult items for English department students in TOEFL Test. The percentage of the item was 70%. This item can be found in question number 15.

(Item number 15)

In the northern and central parts of the state of Idaho _____ and churning rivers.

- A. Majestic mountains are found*
- B. Are majestic mountains found*
- C. Are found majestic mountains*
- D. Finding majestic mountains*

For this item, there were only 3 students chose (C) as the correct answer. From this result, we could see that inverted subject and verb become the biggest problem for the students in doing structure TOEFL test. The problem of item inverted subject and verb could also be seen in item 30 (60%).

Multiple Clause Sentence

Multiple clause sentence item became the second most problem for English department students in TOEFL test. Based on the data analysis, there were 6 (60%)

students chose incorrect answer. The item of multiple clause could be found in item number 8.

(Item number 8)

Sports medicine is a medical specialty that deals with the identification and treatment of injuries to persons_____.

- A. *Sports are involved*
- B. *Involve in sports*
- C. *They are involved in sports*
- D. *Sports involve them*

In this item, the total percentage of incorrect answers was 60%. There were only 4 students the correct answer (B). It indicated that most students also face difficulty in multiple clause sentences.

Reduced Clause Sentence

English department students faced difficulty in doing reduced clause item in TOEFL test. There were 5 (50%) students had a problem in doing this structure test. The question of reduced clause sentence could be found in item 5.

(Item number 5)

Evidence suggests that one-quarter of operations_____by pass surgery may be unnecessary.

- A. *they involve*
- B. *Involve*
- C. *Involving*
- D. *which they involve*

In this item, the total percentage of incorrect answers was 60%. There were only 4 students the correct answer (C). It indicated that most students also face difficulty in reduced clause sentence.

Form of the verb

Form of the verb was one of the most difficulties item faced by English department in TOEFL test. The question of this item can be seen in number 29.

right. I do not understand English grammar a lot. I often face difficulties in doing grammar test"; (c) "Grammar aspect often makes me confused"; (d) "I have to learn English grammar a lot. This English aspect became the problem in my TOEFL test".

The findings of the data interview above showed that grammatical competence became one of the factors influence the students in TOEFL Test. Most students responded that poor grammatical competence was the factor why they got low score in TOEFL. Frequently, they faced problems in identifying the number of clause of the sentence since they did not which the subject, verb, or conjunction in the sentence. This finding was also proven by the result of the test that there were many students made incorrect answer in the item of multiple clause sentences. From the data of interview, we could also see that they are not very familiar with a sentence in which the subject does not come before a verb, they think that all kinds of sentence has a subject before a verb. This data is related to the result of test that the highest percentage errors are from the item of multiple clauses and invert subject and verb.

CONCLUSION

From the findings of this study, it can be concluded that English department students faced obstacles in TOEFL structure test. There were 5 items indicated as the problem for the students, they are inverted subject and verb, multiple clauses sentence, form of verb, adjective and adverb, and reduced clause sentence. The findings of this research also showed that the factor influenced students' difficulty in TOEFL structure test is their lack mastery in grammatical competence.

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