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READINESS AND STUDENTS' ABILITIES IN ACHIEVING TOEFL SCORES AS A REQUIREMENT FOR GRADUATION AT THE FACULTY OF DA'WAH AND COMMUNICATION SCIENCES, STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY RADEN INTAN LAMPUNG

Abstract

The most significant phenomenon in the final semester's completion drama is meeting the various requirements for thesis defense, including achieving the TOEFL score standard set by a university. Students often have to take the TOEFL test more than three times to reach the minimum required score. Besides completing the thesis within six months or one semester, they also need to fulfill other final tasks such as comprehensive exams, demanding considerable effort to accomplish. This phenomenon happened by some students in UIN Raden Intan Lampung at the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication Sciences. Thus, the objectives of this research are to identify factors influencing students' readiness to achieve the TOEFL score, to evaluate the level of students' readiness in reaching the TOEFL score, to assess students' ability to achieve the TOEFL score, and to provide recommendations for enhancing students' readiness and ability to attain the TOEFL score. The research approach used is qualitative, specifically a field research approach. The primary data sources or research subjects include all stakeholders involved in policy determination and students who will or are undergoing TOEFL tests, utilizing snowball sampling technique for selection. Data collection involves interviews, observations, and documentation. Data processing methods in this study include four stages: data reduction, data presentation, data verification, and triangulation. The research findings indicate that in analyzing students' readiness for achieving the TOEFL score as a prerequisite for graduation at the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication Sciences, Raden Intan Lampung State Islamic University, most students are found to be unprepared to meet the required TOEFL score. The study involves 200 students from various study programs who have taken the TOEFL test, and only 30% of them have achieved the qualifying TOEFL score for graduation. Factors contributing to students' low readiness include a lack of understanding of the TOEFL test format, limited time allocated for study, and inadequate

Keywords

Readiness, Students' Abilities , TOEFL Scores

A. INTRODUCTION

With the development in this era of globalization, Indonesia continues its development and improves the quality of human resources, one of which is through educational development. This is evident in the rapid growth of science and information technology. Chang (2006) states that the process of globalization is closely related to the development of information technology and the dominance of the English language on the international stage. This has facilitated communication among people worldwide, bringing them closer together as space and time are no longer barriers. At this point, a lingua franca is needed to unite them.

Urai Salam (2017) explicated that the globalization process has solidified English as the Lingua Franca, serving as a means of international communication. This has directly impacted language policies in non-English speaking countries. In other words, the significant challenge posed by globalization is the erosion of English proficiency, as it has become a primary tool for global communication. Even if someone achieves remarkable success in life, without proficiency in English, they may struggle to contribute to the global arena.

This global shift towards English has created opportunities for businesses to become multinational or even international. This necessitates skills from human resources to sharpen their communication abilities, particularly in English. Proficiency in English is crucial for individuals to compete and secure employment.

English is considered an essential tool for communication in the education sector, from primary schools to universities. English is incorporated into the formal education system, and it remains a subject of study at the university level. Proficiency in English is not only emphasized in various faculties or departments but is also a requirement for graduation, often demonstrated through tests like TOEFL.

Longman (2012) explained that TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) measures a person's academic English language proficiency. It has evolved from paper-based to computer-based and, ultimately, Internet-Based TOEFL (IBT). The purpose of the TOEFL test is to ensure that students can express ideas both orally and in writing in English, enabling them to find employment in today's competitive job market. Additionally, TOEFL facilitates students who wish to pursue further education abroad.

To achieve optimal scores on the TOEFL test and meet the university's standards, students must master its three sections: listening, reading, and structure. These sections evaluate the ability to understand spoken English, comprehend written narratives, and apply grammatical structures correctly.

At Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Intan Lampung, TOEFL is a requirement for all faculties, with a standard score of 450. Achieving this score is challenging, and students often need to take the test multiple times. Moreover, students must complete their theses within six months, along with other final assignments, such as comprehensive exams.

It is not easy for students to meet the university's set standard score of 450. They often have to take the test more than three times to achieve the minimum score. In addition to completing their thesis within 6 months or one semester and finishing their final assignments such as comprehensive exams, they are also required to pass the TOEFL test with a score of 400, accompanied by significant effort.

Bambang Irfani (2019) said that based on data from the Language Center of Raden Intan State Islamic University, many students fail and have to retake the test because they cannot meet the university's specified score. According to the TOEFL test data, students face difficulties, particularly in the listening section. This is attributed to their infrequent exposure to English conversations and limited reading of English books, making it challenging for them to recognize English words and proper pronunciation. Furthermore, students lack practice in speaking English in their daily lives, resulting in a lack of confidence when conversing in English with their peers. This significantly affects their listening skills in comprehending and accurately expressing words in English. Meanwhile, the achievement of standard scores in the other two components supports each other.

Accademic documentation of Da'wah faculty (2020) showed that this issue is a major concern for students across various faculties, including the Faculty of Islamic Propagation and Communication at Raden Intan State Islamic University. Data from the academic department indicates that only around 150 out of 910 students from the 2015 cohort in the Faculty of Islamic Propagation and Communication passed the TOEFL test.

Documentation of the Language Center (2020) showed the root of the problem lies in students' lack of genuine preparation to enhance their English proficiency for the TOEFL test. This is evident from the surge in TOEFL test registrations at the Language Center of UIN Raden Intan Lampung, especially in the months approaching graduation and thesis defense. Consequently, 760 students from the 2015 cohort of the Faculty of Islamic Propagation and Communication, constituting 72.5% of the total, have not passed the TOEFL test by the time of their thesis defense.

According to some students from the Faculty of Islamic Propagation and Communication at UIN Raden Intan Lampung, the perception of the TOEFL test is negative. Students see it as an obstacle and hindrance, making it difficult for them to face the thesis defense. Some deem the TOEFL test as unimportant because passing it does not necessarily indicate English proficiency. They lack confidence in passing the TOEFL test in a single attempt and view it as a waste of time and money due to the need for multiple attempts. Students express reluctance towards the TOEFL test, as they are already under pressure to pass with a score of 450 while striving for academic excellence, handling numerous assignments, and completing their thesis. This leads to stress and frustration among students. They advocate for specialized English courses to adequately prepare for the TOEFL test, enabling them to face it with confidence without the need for multiple attempts. However, students acknowledge that their procrastination in learning English and preparing

for the TOEFL test is a cause of their failure. This delay results in confusion as they approach their thesis defense, leading some to resort to falsifying TOEFL certificates.

This research is prompted by the requirement of a munaqosah (thesis defense) at the Faculty of Islamic Propagation and Communication at Raden Intan State Islamic University, necessitating students to achieve a specified TOEFL score. This is crucial as TOEFL is essential for assessing students' communication and comprehension skills in English. TOEFL is also recognized as an international standard for determining English language proficiency, including for university students. Understanding students' readiness and capabilities to achieve the required TOEFL score can guide efforts to prepare and enhance their skills to meet these requirements

B. RESEARCH METHOD

The research design employed in this study is field research, utilizing a qualitative descriptive approach. This approach views the object as dynamic, a result of constructed thoughts and interpretations of observed phenomena, and holistic, considering every aspect of the object as an inseparable unity. This descriptive qualitative research aims to portray a situation or phenomenon as it is.

This research aims to analyze the readiness and abilities of students in achieving TOEFL scores as a requirement for graduation at the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication Sciences, Raden Intan Lampung State Islamic University. The specific objectives of this research are: (1) to identify factors influencing students' readiness in achieving TOEFL scores, (2) to evaluate the level of readiness of students in achieving TOEFL scores, (3) to assess the level of students' abilities in achieving TOEFL scores, and (4) to provide recommendations to enhance the readiness and abilities of students in achieving TOEFL scores.

The researcher employed purposive sampling, as suggested by Joko Subagyo (2019), selecting individuals based on specific characteristics or criteria possessed by the subjects. Data collection for the study involves several steps related to the research methodology, namely interviews, observations, and documentation.

In qualitative research, it is crucial to capture the essence of the research from investigation to presentation in a concise manner conducted in the field. This is because there may be unrecorded data, and the researcher may forget the nuances of the situation, turning various aspects into meaningless phenomena. Following Millis and Huberman, as cited by Djumhan Pida, qualitative data analysis still uses words organized into necessary texts through three concurrent, repetitive, and continuous activities: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion.

C. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Results of Student Readiness Analysis for TOEFL Scores

In the analysis of student readiness for achieving TOEFL scores as a requirement for graduation at the Faculty of Dakwah and Communication Sciences, State Islamic University of Raden Intan Lampung, it was found that the majority of students are not ready to attain the required TOEFL scores. This research involved 200 students from various study programs who had taken the TOEFL exam, and their results were verified. Based on the obtained data, only 30% of students achieved TOEFL scores that met the requirements for graduation. Factors contributing to the low readiness of students include:

1. **English Proficiency:** Proficiency in the English language is a crucial factor in preparing for the TOEFL exam. Students need to have strong listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills in English to answer the exam questions effectively.
2. **Study Preparation:** The level of preparation undertaken by students before the exam significantly influences the results. The more time and effort invested in studying, the better the students' preparation.
3. **Knowledge of Exam Format:** Students need to understand the format and structure of the TOEFL exam, including the types of questions, the number of sections, and the allotted time for each section.
4. **Practice Exams:** Regularly practicing TOEFL questions is essential. This helps students become familiar with the types of questions in the exam and improves their time management skills.
5. **Study Habits:** Good study habits, such as maintaining a consistent study schedule, avoiding distractions, and staying focused, can enhance student readiness.
6. **Health and Psychological Conditions:** Physical health and mental well-being also play a role in student readiness. Healthy and calm students tend to perform better in exams.
7. **Resources and Access to Learning Materials:** Access to learning resources, such as books, courses, and online training materials, also influences readiness. Students with good access to these resources can prepare more effectively.
8. **Social Support:** Support from friends, family, and teachers can contribute to improving student readiness. Moral support and assistance in solving learning problems can help students feel more prepared.
9. **Motivation:** The level of motivation among students in facing the TOEFL exam also affects readiness. Students with strong goals for taking the exam and recognizing the importance of TOEFL results in achieving their objectives are more motivated.
10. **Strategic Abilities:** The ability to develop strategies for answering questions, managing time, and handling various types of TOEFL questions is also a factor influencing readiness.
11. **Exam Environment Conditions:** Factors such as noise, comfort, and the overall atmosphere of the exam environment can also affect student readiness when facing the TOEFL exam.

By understanding these factors, students can plan more effective preparation and improve their chances of success in the TOEFL exam. Therefore, there is a need for efforts to

enhance student readiness through training programs and guidance to help students improve their abilities to achieve the expected TOEFL scores.

Results of Student Abilities Analysis in Achieving TOEFL Scores

The results of the analysis of student abilities in achieving TOEFL scores as a graduation requirement at the Faculty of Dakwah and Communication Sciences, State Islamic University of Raden Intan Lampung, indicate that the majority of students have sufficient English language proficiency. In this study, it was found that approximately 70% of students have adequate English language skills to achieve the required TOEFL scores. However, there is a small percentage of students who still have limitations in their English language abilities, making it challenging for them to attain sufficient TOEFL scores. Additionally, several factors influence students' abilities to achieve TOEFL scores.

1. **Education Level:** An individual's education level can influence their TOEFL scores. Higher education levels, such as bachelor's or postgraduate degrees, tend to correlate with better English language proficiency and deeper knowledge. This can help them answer TOEFL questions more effectively and accurately. Furthermore, education level reflects a better understanding and analysis, enhancing a person's ability to comprehend TOEFL questions.
2. **English Proficiency Level:** English proficiency is a significant factor in achieving TOEFL scores. Individuals with good English language skills can easily understand and answer questions in the TOEFL exam. This proficiency includes vocabulary comprehension, grammatical structure, and the ability to speak and write in English effectively. The higher one's English proficiency, the greater the chances of achieving high TOEFL scores.
3. **Preparation Level:** The level of preparation undertaken before taking the TOEFL exam also influences the achievement of TOEFL scores. Those who prepare well, such as regularly practicing TOEFL questions, deepening their understanding of TOEFL question types, and practicing listening and reading skills, have an advantage in facing the TOEFL exam. Mature preparation helps individuals become more familiar with the format and types of TOEFL questions, improving their ability to answer questions and potentially achieve high TOEFL scores.

In this study, several areas that need improvement were identified for students to attain higher TOEFL scores, such as listening, reading, and writing skills. In conclusion, the majority of students have sufficient abilities to achieve TOEFL scores as a graduation requirement at the Faculty of Dakwah and Communication Sciences, but efforts are still needed to enhance English language proficiency in specific areas.

D. CONCLUSION

The research findings indicate that in analyzing students' readiness for achieving the TOEFL score as a prerequisite for graduation at the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication Sciences, Raden Intan Lampung State Islamic University, most students are found to be unprepared to meet the required TOEFL score. The study involves 200 students from various study programs who have taken the TOEFL test, and only 30% of them have achieved the qualifying TOEFL score for graduation. Factors contributing to students' low readiness include a lack of understanding of the TOEFL test format, limited time allocated for study, and inadequate facilities and learning resources. Regarding the analysis of students' abilities to achieve the TOEFL score, the results show that a majority of students have sufficient English language proficiency. About 70% of students possess adequate English language skills to achieve the set TOEFL score. However, a small percentage of students still struggle with English language proficiency, making it challenging for them to attain the required TOEFL score. Additionally, various factors influence students' abilities to achieve the TOEFL score, such as educational background, learning motivation, and support received from the surrounding environment.

E. SUGGESTIONS

Achieving the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) target can be a crucial goal for many students, especially if they plan to pursue studies abroad or meet specific academic program requirements. Here are some steps that faculties or students can take to reach the TOEFL target:

Steps for Students:

1. **Set a Target Score:** Students need to establish a TOEFL target that aligns with the requirements of their desired study program or job. This provides clear direction.
2. **Learn the Test Structure:** Students should understand the structure and format of the TOEFL test, including the number of sections and what each section assesses (Reading, Listening, Speaking, Writing).
3. **Use Study Materials:** Utilize textbooks, online resources, and available TOEFL study materials to understand the tactics and strategies needed to answer questions correctly.
4. **Regular Practice:** Regular practice is crucial. Students can take online practice TOEFL tests or enroll in TOEFL preparation classes if possible.
5. **Improve Reading and Listening Skills:** Regularly read and listen to materials in English to expand vocabulary and listening comprehension.
6. **Communicate in English:** Speaking in English with friends or through online platforms can help improve speaking skills.
7. **Develop Writing and Speaking Skills:** Learn how to compose good essays and practice speaking in front of a mirror or with friends.
8. **Take TOEFL Preparation Courses:** If possible, join TOEFL preparation courses at institutions or organizations experienced in TOEFL test preparation.

9. Use Official TOEFL Resources: Official resources from ETS (Educational Testing Service), such as TOEFL Prep books, online practice tests, and official guides, are excellent references.
10. Evaluate Progress: Periodically, take practice tests to measure progress and identify areas that need improvement.

Steps for Faculty:

1. Provide Resources: Faculty can provide resources in the form of books, study materials, or access to TOEFL preparation courses.
2. Encourage Active Participation: Faculty can encourage students to actively participate in TOEFL preparation courses and provide opportunities for English speaking practice.
3. Offer Additional Support: Faculty can offer additional support, such as counseling or academic guidance, to students facing difficulties in preparing for the TOEFL.
4. Provide Information and Understanding: Faculty can offer information about the format and importance of the TOEFL test, as well as help students understand required score criteria.
5. Collaborate with Preparation Institutions: If possible, faculty can collaborate with local TOEFL preparation institutions to provide additional training or resources.
6. Evaluate Learning Processes: Faculty can periodically evaluate the effectiveness of their TOEFL preparation programs and identify areas that need improvement.

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