

LEARNING STRATEGIES OF SUCCESSFUL STUDENTS IN TOEFL TEST: A CASE STUDY IN UNIVERSITY

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Abstract: Now a number of Indonesian colleges demand TOEFL scores in order to graduate and the students' comprehension of English in academic work can be predicted by their TOEFL results. However, it is not easy to get this score, many students have difficulty and fail to achieve the graduation requirements by getting a minimum score of 500. Thus, this research aimed to find out the strategies used by students to achieve high scores in conducting the TOEFL exam and to know the students' process in choosing strategies for each TOEFL section. The qualitative research was used in this navigation and took an interview of 15 questions from 3 students of University Islam Malang in the semester 8 who had taken the TOEFL exam with a score above 500. The result showed that students used memory and metacognitive strategies in listening comprehension, they used cognitive and metacognitive strategies in the structure and written expression and for reading comprehension, students used cognitive and metacognitive strategy.

Key Words: Learning strategies and TOEFL Test

INTRODUCTION

The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is one of the most widely used assessments of English competence. People studying TOEFL have different goals, such as job requirements, scholarships, immigrants, and academic registration within the national to international scope. According to Wahyuni et al. (2015), several Indonesian colleges demand TOEFL scores to graduate. Additionally, according to Hidayanti, I., Zuhairi, A., and Kurniasih, K. (2021) stated that TOEFL can also be used as a tool to measure students' ability to learn foreign languages properly and correctly. One of the tests that individuals must take to demonstrate their level of English competency is the TOEFL. Regarding categorization, there are three types of TOEFL tests: Internet-based test (IBT), computer-based test (CBT), and paper-based test (PBT). For the TOEFL PBT, a pencil is used to fill in the answers on paper sheets that serve as the medium. The next TOEFL format is CBT, which uses a computer as the testing tool. The interactive program shows all of the questions on the screen. The final one is IBT, a computer-based version of the TOEFL that is administered online via the Internet in place of the computer-based version. All students majoring in the English Education Department at Universitas Islam Malang are required to pass the TOEFL with a minimum score of 500. English students, the TOEFL is very important as a condition for graduating from college. However, it is not easy to get this score, many students have difficulty and fail to achieve the graduation requirements by getting a minimum score of 500. The article by Hidayanti, I., and Zuhairi, A. (2021) expresses an opinion from Phillips, D. (2001) that resulted from each of three sections—listening comprehension, written structure and expression, and reading proficiency—are used to assess the TOEFL test results. The majority of students find it challenging to complete the TOEFL, making it a difficult test to pass. Lack of learning strategies is a typical characteristic that makes it harder for students to answer the TOEFL (Antoni, 2014). A plan created with a specific goal in mind is called a learning strategy. To help students pass the test, they must learn how to answer the TOEFL.

The most effective teaching method will guide students to complete TOEFL questions and receive a good score on the test.

According to Ismiatun, F., Ni'mah, D., and Widowati, D. R. (2019) state that language learning strategies have evolved into fundamental guidelines for both teachers and students. This is consistent with Shi's (2017) assertion that learning strategies are actions that students take to enhance their learning. It also helps students take charge of their education by improving their linguistic abilities. Aiming to comprehend reality, Rossum and Hamer (2010) proposed five learning concepts: (1) learning as gaining more knowledge; (2) learning as memorization; (3) learning as acquiring facts, procedures, and other useful information; (4) learning as an abstraction of meaning; and (5) learning as an interpretive process. Nurhayati (2016)'s previous studies revealed that some students employed study techniques both before and during tests. For instance, when reading, pupils first skim the responses before looking at the relevant portion of the question. Another tactic students employ to complete the TOEFL is time management. In addition, students who practice their English will frequently get more comfortable with the TOEFL.

Knowing that achieving a score of 500 on the TOEFL is not an easy thing, and is a problem for some students, especially students of the Universitas Islam Malang majoring in English. Additionally, being aware of the impact learning tactics have on students' ability to achieve good TOEFL scores. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to gather data on student intelligence that would make it easier for successful students to complete the TOEFL and get scores higher than 500.

METHOD

This research employed a phenomenon or investigating the social issues under investigation is known as qualitative research (Creswell, 2014). The case study method was employed in this investigation which each process is carried out in detail, sharp, and in-depth (Hatim, 2022). Cases in question can be individuals, groups, organizations, or institutions. From the case research, it is hoped that the researcher will gain in-depth knowledge about the case under study. The purpose of this study is to help Universitas Islam Malang English program students who have taken or plan to take the TOEFL exam.

1. What are the strategies used by the students in each TOEFL section to achieve high scores?
2. Based on their strategies used in TOEFL, How the students process of the strategy to reach a high score?

For this study, the researcher took an interview of 15 questions from 3 students of University Islam Malang in semester 8 who had taken the TOEFL exam with a score above 500. In selecting 3 students with the criteria set by the researcher, there were several selection processes carried out by the researcher. First, students who have completed semester 1-7 courses. By looking at the KHS of students who have good grades in related subjects. Second, have followed the pretest and learning procedures that have been provided by the campus to take the TOEFL exam. For example, focusing on listening comprehension, writing structure and expression, and reading comprehension. The information from 3 individuals with TOEFL scores higher than 500 is provided below. All participants are initialed as NDK, IA, and HH.

Data Collection

To collect data, researchers used several steps from 15 interviews in this study. Interview questions that have been modified from (Hatim, 2022) and added several interview questions that have been verified by specialists that have been verified by experts are distributed offline. Then, after the interview was over, the researcher thanked the participants for helping in conducting the research. The researcher processed the analysis of the interview data that had been obtained from the participants to find out the results of the answers to the research problems.

Data Analysis

Finding and organizing interview transcripts, field notes, and other information that would improve their comprehension and help them obtain findings is the methodical process of data analysis (Sugiyono, 2010). Secondly, the process of analyzing data in qualitative research is challenging and time-consuming. Due to the fact that researchers typically conduct thorough or accurate interviews, each of which needs to be scrutinized and evaluated (Ary et al, (Ary et al, 2010). And according to Miles and Huberman in Rahardjo (2002), data analysis in qualitative research employs a number of methods, including the data collection, data reduction, data display and data conclusion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

What are the strategies used by the students in each TOEFL section to achieve high scores?

From the interviews, information was obtained regarding the learning strategies of respondents majoring in English to achieve high scores in the TOEFL exam. The following is a presentation of the results of interviews with respondents to answer the first problem formulation which can be seen from questions 1 to question 6.

Table 1. The Result of Interviews

NO	QUESTIONS	ANSWER
1	How do you prepare for the TOEFL exam?	<i>Usually, I review the TOEFL exam material that has been taught during lectures, then I try several questions according to the material taught (NDK)</i>
		<i>I prepared myself to take the TOEFL exam by answering several questions from the internet, both from websites and an easy video tutorial for taking the TOEFL exam on YouTube (IA)</i>
		<i>In order to get maximum results, I prepare myself by taking part in TOEFL exam courses or training with mentors who have mastered or are experts in the TOEFL field (HH)</i>
2	In your opinion, out of the 3 sections of the TOEFL exam, which is the most difficult to understand?	<i>In my opinion, the most difficult part to understand is the structure and written expression section because you have to understand grammar and expressions that are common in English (NDK)</i>
		<i>Structure and written expression are the most difficult parts of the TOEFL exam in my opinion. Because here we understand or study two parts, namely completing sentences and identifying grammatical errors (IA)</i>
		<i>So far, the most difficult thing for me to understand in the TOEFL exam is the structure and written expression section (HH)</i>

NO	QUESTIONS	ANSWER
3	In your opinion, which of the 3 sections of the TOEFL exam is the easiest to understand?	<i>In my opinion, the easiest part to understand in the TOEFL exam is listening comprehension. Because I like listening to music and watching podcasts (NDK)</i>
		<i>Maybe listening comprehension is the easiest part to understand in the TOEFL exam. Because I like watching movies and watching YouTube (IA)</i>
		<i>I personally prefer the reading comprehension section because basically I like reading books, news information and journal articles. So, reading comprehension in the TOEFL exam is easier to understand (HH)</i>
4	What learning strategies did you use to work on the listening comprehension section?	<i>There may not be any special learning strategies, which I do in the listening comprehension section by listening to a lot of English music and watching several English podcasts which I like (NDK)</i>
		<i>In order to get used to the questions in the listening comprehension section, I spend a lot of my time watching films and watching videos on YouTube (IA)</i>
		<i>The learning strategy that I use is to get used to working on listening comprehension questions in the form of short conversations and long conversations (HH)</i>
5	What learning strategies did you use to work on the structure and written expression section?	<i>The learning strategy in the structure and written expression section that I use is to look for keywords related to the answer (NDK)</i>
		<i>The learning strategy that I use is lots of practice questions about structure and written expression (IA)</i>
		<i>Usually, I do the sentence completion questions first, and then do the recognizing grammatical mistakes section (HH)</i>
6	What learning strategies did you use to work on the reading comprehension section?	<i>The strategy that I often use in the reading comprehension section of the TOEFL exam is to read the questions first, then look for the main topic of the reading (NDK)</i>
		<i>The strategy I use in the reading comprehension section is time management, not repeating reading (IA)</i>
		<i>Usually, I work on the vocabulary knowledge section first to speed up the processing time. Then work on the text comprehension section (HH)</i>

Based on the collected statistics, it appears that every student did a fairly decent job of preparing for the TOEFL exam. They have their own learning strategies which they think are effective and can help them answer the TOEFL exam and get maximum scores. Usually some routines are done over and over again so that they become habits. Oxford (1990) defined learning strategies as steps that students take to improve their learning understanding. Learning strategies are important for students because they are a means of active and independent student involvement to develop communicative competence.

The TOEFL exam's first section is dedicated to listening comprehension. The TOEFL exam's listening comprehension section includes recorded content that includes vocabulary, colloquial idioms, and grammatical constructs commonly seen in spoken English. This part assesses comprehension of both brief and lengthy conversations. In this part, it was found that the strategy used by the first respondent was to listen to a lot of English music and watch several English podcasts. The second respondent spends a lot of free time watching films and watching short videos on YouTube to practice and learn listening comprehension in the TOEFL exam. Additionally, the third respondent grew accustomed to answering listening

comprehension questions from the appropriate course in the format of both brief and lengthy chats. From these data it can be concluded that although the learning strategies used by respondents are different, the method is the same for capturing the audio being played to understand the listening comprehension section. All strategies used by respondents correspond to those classified by Oxford (2003) and Cheng (2015) as memory strategies. Students' memory skills are related to remember memory methods. Students must gather information in order to use this method, as derived from words, pictures, and music (rhyme).

Next is structure and written expression, Sentences in structure and written expression assess understanding of the grammatical and structural components of standard written English. These lines don't benefit pupils in any certain field of study and span a broad range of subjects. If the subject has a national focus, it might allude to Canadian or American history, culture, the arts, or literature. It is not necessary to have knowledge of this context in order to respond to inquiries about grammatical or structural issues. In this section, the strategy used by the first respondent is to look for keywords related to the answer. Second respondent with lots of practice questions about structure and written expression. And the third respondent did the sentence completion section first and then worked on the recognizing grammatical mistakes section. Apart from that, the strategies they use still refer to the TOEFL books they have studied during lectures. In the TOEFL book, explanations and discussions are given about the questions in structure and written expression. Every strategy employed by the participants aligns with the metacognitive methods that Oxford (2003) and Cheng (2015) refer to. Metacognitive methods include self-evaluation of progress, planning, monitoring mistakes, and assignment evaluation as they pertain to how students manage their learning.

The final one is reading comprehension, which includes questions based on reading passages and reading passages itself. Following your reading of a passage, you will be asked to discuss the key points and supporting details. Inferences based on the given information, textual organization, context-based identification of unknown terminology, and referential links between pronouns and abstract nouns are among the other tasks you will be expected to perform. The first respondent's approach in this section is to read the questions first, then look for the reading's major topic. The second respondent, with time management, did not repeat the reading questions. And the strategy used by the third respondent is to work on vocabulary knowledge first to speed up processing time, then work on the text comprehension section.

According to Oxford (2003) and Chang (2015), it can be stated that the methods employed by the respondents are classified as cognitive strategies. Students are encouraged to manipulate information through cognitive methods. Put differently, cognitive strategies pertain to the ways in which students approach their learning, such as through inference, analysis, summarization, and note-taking. These three theories—memory, meta-cognitive, and cognitive strategies—are mostly utilized to get ready for the TOEFL exam, according to Chang (2015) and Oxford (2003)'s theories. in order for pupils that employ this technique to be successful in earning good ratings.

How do the students process the strategy to reach a high score?

From the interviews it was found that respondents had various ways to develop strategies to get high scores in the TOEFL exam. Listening comprehension is divided into

two parts, namely short conversations and long conversations. In structure and written expression it is divided into two parts, namely sentence completion and error identification. Reading comprehension is divided into two parts, namely text comprehension and vocabulary knowledge. The following is a presentation of the results of interviews with respondents to answer the second problem formulation which can be seen from questions 7 to question 15.

NO	QUESTIONS	ANSWER
7	What strategies did you use in listening comprehension of short conversation sections?	<i>What I usually do is get used to listening to music, because from listening to music I can catch and understand short sentences which are almost like short conversations (NDK)</i>
		<i>Usually, I watch a lot of short videos that appear on my YouTube, from there I can practice listening to the words conveyed through short videos which are similar to short conversations in the listening comprehension section of the TOEFL exam (IA)</i>
		<i>I made it a habit to practice questions about short conversations in listening comprehension that I had obtained from the course (HH)</i>
8	What strategies did you use in listening comprehension of long conversation sections?	<i>What I usually do is get into the habit of listening to podcasts, because from listening to podcasts I can capture and understand long conversations being conveyed and take important points from these conversations (NDK)</i>
		<i>Usually, I watch a lot of film, from there I can listen to the storyline and long lines of conversation. Apart from getting entertainment, I can also train my listening and get used to the pronunciation that is conveyed (IA)</i>
		<i>The way I often do it when listening to long conversations in listening comprehension during the TOEFL exam is by doing lots of practice questions from my course (HH)</i>
9	Is 40 minutes enough to do all the parts of listening comprehension?	<i>In my opinion, it's not enough, because sometimes there are some conversations that we have to repeat due to the volume or listening device (NDK)</i>
		<i>I think it's still not enough, because if all parts of the listening comprehension only contained short conversations it might be enough, but there are long conversations too (IA)</i>
		<i>In my opinion, it's still not enough, because one question can take approximately 1 minute, and the total number of questions in the listening comprehension section is 50 questions (HH)</i>

NO	QUESTIONS	ANSWER
10	What strategies did you use in the structure and written expression of the sentence completion sections?	<i>An easy way that I often do in the structure and written expression of the sentence completion section is to look for the meaning of the words and meanings that best match the structure (NDK)</i>
		<i>Usually, I practice a lot of questions about completing sentences in the structure and written expression section of the TOEFL exam, either from exercises that have been taught during lectures or from the internet (IA)</i>
		<i>I learn and understand subject and verb agreement, parts of speech, irregular verbs, singular and plural, and all related material that has been taught during lectures or during TOEFL courses (HH)</i>
11	What strategies did you use in the structure and written expression of the error identification sections?	<i>An easy way that I often do in the structure and written expression of the error identification section is to look for the subject (S) and verb (V) in the sentence (NDK)</i>
		<i>The learning strategy that I use is lots of practice questions about structure and written expression (IA)</i>
		<i>Usually, I practice a lot of questions about error identification in the structure and written expression section of the TOEFL exam, either from exercises that have been taught during lectures or from the internet (HH)</i>
12	Is 25 minutes enough to do all the structure and written expression?	<i>I think that's enough, because the questions in the structure and written expression section are classified as short questions (NDK)</i>
		<i>I think that's enough (IA)</i>
		<i>I think it's more than enough (HH)</i>
13	What strategies did you use in reading comprehension of the text comprehension sections?	<i>The way I often do it in the reading comprehension of the text comprehension section is to read the question first, then look for the main topic of the text (NDK)</i>
		<i>A quick way that I often do is to look for keywords in each question (IA)</i>
		<i>The strategy I use skimming and scanning reading techniques to get ideas in the text. Because the Reading section's text usually too long, I use this strategy to find the answer quickly and correctly (HH)</i>
14	What strategies did you use in reading comprehension of the vocabulary knowledge sections?	<i>A quick way that I often do is to translate the vocabulary in each question, because there are several vocabulary words that I still don't understand the meaning of sentences (NDK)</i>
		<i>Usually, I translate straight away (IA)</i>
		<i>Maybe you have to practice a lot (HH)</i>
15	Is 55 minutes enough to do all the parts of the reading comprehension?	<i>I think it's enough (NDK)</i>
		<i>I think that's enough to do it. Because to save time I will do the easier questions first (IA)</i>
		<i>I think that's enough. Because in the process of working I still have time to correct the answers. Maybe for students majoring in English this is enough (HH)</i>

Students are very motivated to study for the TOEFL exam, according to data gathered from interviews. To achieve the best test scores, they take the following actions. In general, a person's level of English proficiency determines their TOEFL score (Safitri, 2018). Additionally, to achieve good scores on the TOEFL exam, students must design their technique for answering the questions.

In the listening comprehension section, students select the scanning approach. One of the best methods for responding to the listening section is this one. Students peruse and skim the list of potential responses on the question sheet while the audio instructions play. This is predicated on a theory by Philips (2001) that listening comprehension is primarily concerned with skimming the question's final sentence. This approach is used to give a summary of the questions at a later time.

The second part of the TOEFL exam focuses on structure and written expression. Students can use a variety of techniques to answer this question, including matching-mismatching, word class identification, and subject-verb agreement discovery. Nonetheless, students frequently utilize the following techniques to respond to questions in the structure and written expression section: determining word classes and locating subject-verb agreement. Because structurally questions from one to fifteen concentrate more on determining subject-verb agreement and questions from sixteen to forty concentrate more on recognizing word classes, both methodologies are applied. By classifying each word to locate potential answers, this method greatly aids students in answering error analysis problems, particularly when it comes to word class identification. Fink (2015) states that pupils should be able to identify the word or phrase in the question that includes the error.

Lastly, the reading comprehension section. In this section, students have many strategies for determining answers; read the question first, find the keywords, scan the passage and choose the easy ones. As stated by Fanani (2014), in the reading comprehension section students need to find answers by finding the main idea, focusing on keyword vocabulary, and some details. Reading the questions first means students have to read the questions first, not immediately check the reading. This is done in order to save time effectively and efficiently. Then, finding keywords is one of the strategies students use to answer reading questions. This strategy is very important to help students find the answer without having to read the entire paragraph of the reading. The third is to scan the part. This means that students can choose sections that they like or that they are familiar with. And the last thing is to choose easier questions. In the reading section, the questions in one reading text usually consist of around 7 to 12 questions. And from those questions, they choose the easier one and start part of that one.

Conclusion

In the terms of first question, it showed that students used a variety of methods in each session, such as: 1) students watch films during the listening session; 2) students practice writing questions related to structure and written expression; and 3) during the reading comprehension session, when all students use a method that involves reading the question first and then looking for the main idea of the reading. Vocabulary knowledge can also be used as a starting point. And In the listening comprehension portion, students select the scanning approach. Students used their knowledge of subject-verb agreement and word class identification to tackle the second section of the TOEFL exam, which focuses on structure and written expression. And for the part on reading comprehension. Students can use a variety of methods to obtain the answers, such as reading the question first, looking for keywords, skimming the text, and selecting the simple ones.

The implications of this research are research interpretations that must be understood and carried out in greater depth on an ongoing basis in order to obtain clearer and more detailed results. therefore, future researchers can focus more or categorize only one part of the three parts in the TOEFL exam carefully in order to get maximum results. Then, future researchers must consider several suggestions from previous research, from lecturers before conducting similar research.

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