

English Franca - An Analysis of the Students' Difficulties of TOEFL Prediction

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An Analysis of the Students' Difficulties of TOEFL Prediction Test of Listening Section

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ABSTRACT

⁵ The objective of this study is to know the students' difficulty in doing the TOEFL prediction test of the listening section in ITB AAS Indonesia. This study uses descriptive qualitative research. Based on the results, it is found that the students face difficulty in doing TOEFL listening in both external and internal factors. In external factors, they are: 1) the speaker's accent, 2) the speakers' speed, 3) the speakers' intonation/emphasis, 4) the speakers' pause in pronouncing a sentence, 5) the choice of words (diction) and foreign terms conveyed by the speaker, 6) the sentence structure conveyed by the speaker is too complex, 7) audio interruption causes the audio sounds less/unclear. While, in internal factors, they are: 1) Do not have previous experience doing TOEFL test before, 2) have lack of practice in listening to TOEFL, 3) have limited time in doing TOEFL listening test, 4) a lot of listening questions which consist of 50 questions, 5) have hearing impairment in listening to TOEFL, 6) have memory limitations when listening to TOEFL, 7) lack of motivation and enthusiasm, 8) lack of concentration or focus, 9) have limited mastery of foreign or unfamiliar vocabulary, 10) The appearance of boredom when listening, 11) feel easily distracted by sounds or other things, 12) tend to translate any foreign vocabulary when listening, 13) have trouble catching or finding keywords, 14) busy along with other activities when listening, for example playing writing instruments, taking notes or doing other things.

Keywords: *listening, TOEFL, TOEFL Prediction Test*

INTRODUCTION

⁴ TOEFL stands for Test of English as a Foreign Language. It is a standardized academic English test primarily taken by students applying to universities in the United States. The TOEFL is also accepted as proof of English skill by some universities outside the United States. More than seven

thousand colleges and universities in one hundred and thirty countries, including the best universities in the world, such as the U.S., Canada, UK, Australia, and New Zealand. This test is not only used to register at the university but is also required if you want to work in government agencies, take care of licensing, companies, and also for scholarship registration.

TOEFL examines language skills that are tailored to the academic and professional fields. These fields are packaged and divided into sections. TOEFL test usually consists of three sections with 140 questions. TOEFL includes three aspects, namely (1) Listening Comprehension, (2) Structure and Written Expression, (3) Reading Comprehension. The TOEFL test always starts with Listening Comprehension consisting of Part A, B, and C, then followed by Structure and Written Expression consisting of Part A and B, and the last is Reading Comprehension.

In listening comprehension, the test is to measure the skill to understand spoken English. It contains listening passages and questions about each passage (Gear & Gear, 2002, p. 73). Stirling (2017, p. 131) also states that this listening section measures the skill to understand authentic speech patterns used both in academic (formal) and non-academic (informal) situations.

Listening difficulties include understanding vocabulary, grammar, context, accent or pronunciation, and interesting skill conclusion (Purwaningsih, 2016, p. 2). Some other things that often become problems when facing the TOEFL listening test include not understanding the topic, foreign words, nervousness, being unfamiliar with diction and grammar, repetitions and pauses, wide imagination, and missing detailed information, lack of concentration, lack of understanding of English accents, interpret word for word, lack of knowledge of vocabulary and pronunciation, unable to distinguish certain words and sounds. Analyzing students' difficulties toward listening comprehension helped the students in listening test as well as TOEFL test (Darti & Asmawati, 2017).

The listening comprehension section aims to test our abilities in understanding spoken language. However, to be able to understand spoken language in addition to having to get used to listening to English spoken, we must know English grammar (grammar) adequately. All sentences in this section use the same sentence grammatical (grammatically correct) and usually in the form of a sentence complete. All these sentences are pronounced in conversational English. According to Ang-zie (2020, p. 10), to answer listening comprehension questions well, we are required to have the skill to understand the stress and tone, understand the difference in sound, understand idioms, understand conversational phrases, understanding

groups or verb phrases, find implied information (not clearly stated), understand comparisons, and understand the meaning of the conversation or conversation. The listening section is divided into separately timed parts. They are short conversations, long conversations, and talks/monologues. In each part, we will listen to the audio-only one time (Putlack et al., 2020).

Kasmini & Kadarmo (2014, p. 12) states that all questions in the listening section will usually be played through a headset on the computer or tape using speakers (loudspeakers) that have been prepared for the TOEFL test. Speakers in the tape using American English pronunciations and expressions whose speech and expression are somewhat different from British English (British English). We need to understand the difference especially the way it's pronounced.

Some previous studies were conducted related to TOEFL listening comprehension. In the first research entitled "Investigating Medical Students' Difficulties in TOEFL Listening Test" written by (Rahmi et al., 2020). This research examined the reactions of the students to listening problems in taking the TOEFL test listening portion and their attempts to resolve the difficulties. Most respondents were found to have difficulties recognizing the pronunciation of the native speaker (64%). As the top rank of students' attempts to solve listening difficulties of the TOEFL exam when viewing English TV programs or movies (65.10 percent) and listening to English songs (60 percent). In the second research entitled "Students Difficulties in Passing Listening Section in TOEFL Prediction Test" written by (Chairuddin & Ulfa, 2018). This research to recognize difficulties for learners in passing the TOEFL prediction test listening portion. It is found that there are many facets of student issues, and the most difficult items are: 1) capture the idea of the speaker, 2) recognize the idiomatic language, 3) define the coherent marker, 4) give the utterance a literal meaning, 5) retain the important details. The third research entitled "An Analysis of the Difficulties Encountered by Non-English Department Students in TOEFL Test of Listening Section" written by (Pratiwi, 2017). This research was largely aimed at exploring the difficulties of students listening to the TOEFL exam. The outcome of this study reveals that in the listening portion of the TOEFL exam, the recapitulation score of the students was weak, by percentage 60 percent of students include 9 students of fifteen participants are very low understanding, and 40 percent of students include 6 students are low understanding. This suggests that the students are not comfortable with the TOEFL exam. In the fourth research entitled "Analyzing Students' TOEFL Listening Comprehension Test Performance" written by (Yuliandani et al., 2014). The goal of this analysis is to figure out the most challenging part of

the TOEFL listening interpretation and to find out the problematic aspects. Double negative expressions (23 percent) are the most problematic aspect, while the most perfected aspect is passive (77 percent). The most troublesome aspect in discussions and talks is the subject matter and accurate knowledge is the mastered aspect. In the fifth research entitled “Students’ Difficulties and Strategies in Doing Listening Section On TOEFL-Like Test” written by (Pujiana, 2015). This analysis is to discover the problems encountered by the students and the approach they used in the TOEFL test listening segment. The effect is that the listening section is not simple for them and that part C (lecture) is the most difficult part of the listening section. The result reveals that students interpret attention, keywords, time, and emphasis as issues. The students usually used some techniques to solve the challenge.

From five previous studies about have similarities and differences between these studies. Those studies have a similar focus on TOEFL listening comprehension and its difficulties. But there are differences between those previous studies and this study is the objective. Previous studies above focus on the question items related to listening comprehensions such as the pronunciation of the native speaker, the idea of the speaker, idiomatic language, coherent marker, literal meaning, important details, double negative expressions, passive form, attention, keywords, time, and emphasis as issues. It shows only in the external factor. While this research focuses on the difficulties in doing the TOEFL listening test based on internal and external factors related to it.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher is interested to research the TOEFL Prediction Test of Reading Comprehension. Finally, the researcher takes the title “The Students’ Opinion Toward TOEFL Prediction Test of Reading Comprehension Skill”. The researcher formulates the objective of this study is to know the students’ difficulty in doing the TOEFL prediction test of listening comprehension skill in ITB AAS Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses descriptive qualitative research. Qualitative research is defined as a study that focuses on understanding in the naturalistic setting or everyday life or of a certain phenomenon or person (Neergaard & Ulhøi, 2007, p. 383). They are studies that include the context in which the study's phenomenon is embedded. Taylor et al. (2015, p. 8) state that qualitative researchers develop concepts, ideas, thoughts, and understanding from patterns in the data rather than collecting data to analyze models, hypotheses, or theories.

¹⁴ The method of collecting data in this study uses a questionnaire. Data collection techniques are the most important step in research because the main purpose of the ¹⁶ research is to get the data. McNabb (2004, p. 109) states that a questionnaire can be used to gather information about a large number of respondents (populations) or small groups (samples). In this research, the respondents are ²⁴ 24th-semester students of ITB AAS Indonesia. The researcher uses a closed question. It requires the respondent to choose from several predetermined responses (Andrew et al., 2011, p. 82). In this research, the researcher uses media for sharing questionnaires by using google form. Google ³⁰ forms provide a simple interface to construct interactive forms that contain a variety of question types (multiple-choice, short answer, long answer, dropdown, etc. (Talbert, 2017). Here, the questions are in the form of multiple-choice with four answer options A, B, C, or D ⁷

In this study, the researcher used the technique of data analysis based on Miles and Huberman (1994) which is involving three steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The results of questionnaire data processing are often presented in descriptive form.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

⁵ The objective of this study is to know the students' difficulty in doing the TOEFL prediction test of listening comprehension skills. Two factors cause the students are difficult in doing TOEFL listening in both external and internal factors. Below the findings of the research as follow:

Table 1. External Factor

STATEMENT	Indicator		
	Yes	Sometimes	No
1. The speaker's accent affects your TOEFL Listening skill.	182 (75.5 %)	56 (23.2 %)	3 (1.2 %)
2. Speakers' speed affects your TOEFL Listening skill.	183 (75.9 %)	52 (21.6 %)	6 (2.5 %)
3. Speakers' intonation/emphasis affects your TOEFL Listening skill.	176 (73 %)	59 (24.5 %)	6 (2.5 %)
4. The speakers' pause in pronouncing a sentence affects your TOEFL Listening skill.	144 (59.8 %)	73 (70.3 %)	24 (10 %)
5. The choice of words (diction) and foreign terms conveyed by the	171 (71 %)	60 (24.9 %)	10 (4.1 %)

speaker affects your TOEFL listening skill.			
6. The sentence structure conveyed by the speaker is too complex so it affects your TOEFL Listening skill.	132 (54.8 %)	95 (39.4 %)	14 (5.8 %)
7. Audio interruption makes the audio sounds less/unclear when you are Listening TOEFL.	132 (54.8 %)	72 (29.99 %)	37 (15.4 %)

Form the table above shows that several external factors caused difficulty in doing the TOEFL prediction test of listening comprehension. The first statement about “The speaker's accent affects your TOEFL Listening skill”. There are 182 students or 75.5 % who said ‘yes’, 56 students, or 23.2 % said ‘sometimes’, and only 3 students or 1.2 % said ‘no’. Based on those answers, it shows that most students feel that the speaker's accent affects their TOEFL Listening skill”. The second statement about “Speakers’ speed affects your TOEFL Listening skill”. There are 183 students or 75.9 % who said ‘yes’, 52 students or 21.6 % said ‘sometimes’, and only 6 students or 2.5 % said ‘no’. Based on those answers, it shows that most students feel that the speakers’ speed affects their TOEFL Listening skills. The third statement about “Speakers’ intonation/emphasis affects your TOEFL Listening skill”. There are 176 students or 73 % said ‘yes’, 59 students, or 24.5 % said ‘sometimes’, and only 6 students, or 2.5 % said ‘no’. Based on those answers, it shows that most students feel that the speakers’ intonation/emphasis affects their TOEFL Listening skills. The fourth statement about “Speakers’ pause in pronouncing a sentence affects your TOEFL Listening skill”. There are 144 students or 59.8 % who said ‘yes’, 73 students, or 70.3 % said ‘sometimes’, and only 24 students or 10 % said ‘no’. Based on those answers, it shows that most students feel that the speakers’ pause in pronouncing a sentence affects their TOEFL Listening skills. The fifth statement about “The choice of words (diction) and foreign terms conveyed by the speaker affects your TOEFL listening skill”. There are 171 students or 71 % said ‘yes’, 60 students or 24.9 % said ‘sometimes’, and only 10 students or 4.1 % said ‘no’. Based on those answers, it shows that most students feel that the choice of words (diction) and foreign terms conveyed by the speaker affects their TOEFL listening skills. The sixth statement about “The sentence structure conveyed by the speaker is too complex then affects your TOEFL Listening skill”. There are 132 students or 54.8 % who said ‘yes’, 95 students or 39.4 % said ‘sometimes’, and only 14 students or 5.8 % said ‘no’. Based on those answers, it shows that most students feel that the sentence structure conveyed by the speaker is too complex then affects their TOEFL Listening skills. The

seventh statement about “There is audio interruption so that the audio sounds less/unclear in Listening TOEFL”. There are 132 students or 54.8 % said ‘yes’, 72 students or 29.8 % said ‘sometimes’, and 37 students or 15.4 % said ‘no’. Based on those answers, it shows that most students feel that audio interruption makes the audio sounds less/unclear in Listening TOEFL”.

Table 1. Internal Factor (1)

STATEMENT	Indicator	
	Yes	No
1. Having previous experience doing TOEFL test before	86 (35.7 %)	155 (64.3 %)
2. Lack of practice in listening to TOEFL	100 (41.5 %)	141 (58.5 %)
3. Limited time in doing TOEFL listening test	190 (78.8 %)	51 (21.2 %)

Form the table above shows that some internal factors caused difficulty in doing the TOEFL prediction test of the listening section. The 1st statement about “Have previous experience in doing TOEFL test before”. There are 86 students or 35.7 % said ‘yes’ and 155 students or 64.3 % said ‘no’. Based on those answers, it shows that most students do not have previous experience in listening to the TOEFL. The 2nd statement about “Lack of practice in listening to TOEFL”. There are 100 students or 41.5 % said ‘yes’ and 141 students or 58.5 % said ‘no’. Based on those answers, it shows that most students do not lack practice in listening to TOEFL before. The 3rd statement about “Limited time in doing TOEFL listening test”. There are 190 students or 78.8 % said ‘yes’ and 51 students or 21.2 % said ‘no’. Based on those answers, it shows that most students have limited time in doing the TOEFL listening test.

Table 1. Internal Factor (2)

STATEMENT	Indicator		
	Many	Enough	Less
4. A lot of listening questions which consist of 50 questions	150 (62.2 %)	90 (37.3 %)	0 (0 %)

The 4th statement about “A lot of listening questions which consist of 50 questions”. There are 150 students or 62.2 % who said ‘many’, 90 students or 37.3 % said ‘enough’, and 51 students or 21.2 % said ‘less’. Based on those answers, it shows that most students feel that A lot of listening questions which consist of 50 questions.

Table 1. Internal Factor (3)

STATEMENT	Indicator		
	Yes	Sometimes	No
5. Have hearing impairment in listening to TOEFL	45 (18.7 %)	31 (12.9 %)	162 (76.2 %)
6. Have memory limitations when listening to the TOEFL	123 (51 %)	87 (36.1 %)	31 (12.9 %)
7. Lack of motivation and enthusiasm when listening to the TOEFL	51 (21.2 %)	116 (48.1 %)	74 (30.7 %)
8. Lack of concentration/focus when listening to TOEFL	82 (34 %)	127 (52.7 %)	32 (13.3 %)
9. Have limited mastery of foreign / unfamiliar vocabulary when listening	129 (53.5 %)	103 (42.7 %)	9 (3.7 %)
10. The appearance of boredom when listening to TOEFL	100 (41.5 %)	114 (47.3 %)	27 (11.2 %)
11. Easily distracted by sounds or other things when listening to TOEFL	135 (56 %)	89 (36.9 %)	17 (7.1 %)
12. Have a tendency to interpret any foreign vocabulary when listening to TOEFL	123 (51 %)	105 (43.6 %)	13 (5.4 %)
13. Have trouble catching or finding keywords when listening to TOEFL	108 (44.8 %)	127 (52.7 %)	6 (2.5 %)
14. Busy alone with other activities when listening to TOEFL, for example playing writing instruments, taking notes, or doing other things.	38 (15.8 %)	107 (44.4 %)	96 (39.8 %)

The 5th statement about “Have hearing impairment in listening to TOEFL”. There are 45 students or 18.7 % who said ‘yes’, 31 students or 12.9 % said ‘sometimes’ and 162 students or 76.2 % said ‘no’. Based on those answers, it shows that most students do not have hearing impairment in listening to TOEFL. The 6th statement about “Have memory limitations when listening to TOEFL”. There are 123 students or 51 % who said ‘yes’, 87 students or 36.1 % said ‘sometimes’ and 31 students or 12.9 % said ‘no’. Based on those answers, it shows that most students feel that they have memory limitations when listening to TOEFL. The 7th statement about “Lack of motivation and enthusiasm when listening to TOEFL”. There are 51 students or 21.2 % who said ‘yes’, 116 students or 48.1 % said ‘sometimes’ and 74 students, or 30.7 % said ‘no’. Based on those answers, it shows that most students sometimes feel a lack of motivation and enthusiasm when listening to TOEFL. The 8th statement about “Lack of concentration or focus

when listening to TOEFL". There are 82 students or 34 % who said 'yes', 127 students or 52.7 % said 'sometimes' and 32 students or 13.3 % said 'no'. Based on those answers, it shows that most students sometimes feel a lack of concentration or focus when listening to TOEFL. The 9th statement about "Have a limited mastery of foreign or unfamiliar vocabulary when listening to TOEFL". There are 129 students or 53.5 % who said 'yes', 103 students, or 42.7 % said 'sometimes' and 9 students or 3.7 % said 'no'. Based on those answers, it shows that most students feel to have limited mastery of foreign or unfamiliar vocabulary when listening to TOEFL. The 10th statement about "The appearance of boredom when listening to TOEFL". There are 100 students or 41.5 % who said 'yes', 114 students or 47.3 % said 'sometimes' and 27 students, or 11.2 % said 'no'. Based on those answers, it shows that most students have boredom when listening to TOEFL. The 11th statement about "Easily distracted by sounds or other things when listening to TOEFL". There are 135 students or 56 % who said 'yes', 89 students or 36.9 % said 'sometimes' and 17 students or 7.1 % said 'no'. Based on those answers, it shows that most students feel that they are easily distracted by sounds or other things when listening to TOEFL". The 12th statement about "Tend to interpret any foreign vocabulary when listening to TOEFL". There are 123 students or 51 % who said 'yes', 105 students or 43.6 % said 'sometimes' and 13 students or 5.4 % said 'no'. Based on those answers, it shows that most students tend to interpret any foreign vocabulary when listening to TOEFL. The 13th statement about "Have trouble catching or finding keywords when listening to TOEFL". There are 108 students or 44.8 % who said 'yes', 127 students or 52.7 % said 'sometimes' and only 6 students, or 2.5 % said 'no'. Based on those answers, it shows that most students sometimes have trouble catching or finding keywords when listening to TOEFL. The 14th statement about "Busy along with other activities when listening to TOEFL, for example playing writing instruments, taking notes or doing other things". There are 38 students or 15.8 % who said 'yes', 107 students or 44.4 % said 'sometimes' and 96 students or 39.8 % said 'no'. Based on those answers, it shows that most students sometimes busy along with other activities when listening to TOEFL, for example playing writing instruments, taking notes, or doing other things.

Discussion **1**

The first session of the TOEFL test is a listening comprehension test (Listening Comprehension). This listening session generally consists of 50 questions. We will hear the recording in English and we have to respond or answer questions related to the recording. We have to listen to the recording

as much as possible because we will only hear the recording ¹ once and the recorded material is not written in the test book. There are three sessions in this listening test: PART A which consists of 30 short conversations, each conversation is followed by several questions, PART ¹ which consists of 2 long conversations followed by several questions, and PART C which consists of 3 talks/lectures (like a lecturer explaining a certain topic). In the TOEFL test, we will meet several question sessions. One of them is a listening session. In this session, we will hear English native speakers talk, have dialogues, or even listen to short speeches or short speeches. After listening to the audio, we must answer the questions related to the audio earlier. In dealing with this listening question, several strategies are needed in doing the listening test. Listening Comprehension ²⁰ Section aims to test our skill to understand spoken language. However, to be able to understand the spoken language, besides having to get used to listening to spoken English, we must have a knowledge of the structure of adequate English (grammar). All sentences in this section use a grammatically correct sentence (correct according to grammar) and usually in the form of a complete sentence (Purnaning et al., 2014, p. 10). All these sentences are pronounced in conversational English.

Listening is the most difficult part of the TOEFL test for most people. And indeed for many people listen is the most difficult language skill (Sudarmono, 2018, p. 35). For the structure section and reading we can anticipate by understanding grammar material and master a lot of basic vocabulary, then practice a lot do the TOEFL standard questions. Difficulty in doing TOEFL listening questions is a fairly complex activity, meaning that there are many aspects and many factors that influence it. These factors are interrelated, in other words, that reading difficulty is influenced by one another. Two factors cause the students are difficult in doing TOEFL listening in both external and internal factors.

In external factors, they are: 1) The speaker's accent affects your TOEFL Listening skill. 2) Speakers' speed affects your TOEFL Listening skill. 3) Speakers' intonation/emphasis affects your TOEFL Listening skill. 4) The speakers' pause in pronouncing a sentence affects your TOEFL Listening skill. 5) The choice of words (diction) and foreign terms conveyed by the speaker affects your TOEFL listening skill. 6) The sentence structure conveyed by the speaker is too complex so it affects the TOEFL Listening skill. 7) Audio interruption makes the audio sounds less/unclear when Listening TOEFL.

In internal factors, they are: 1) Do not have previous experience doing TOEFL test before. 2) Have a lack of practice in listening to TOEFL.

3) Have limited time in doing the TOEFL listening test. 4) A lot of listening questions which consist of 50 questions. 5) Have hearing impairment in listening to TOEFL. 6) Have memory limitations when listening to TOEFL. 7) Lack of motivation and enthusiasm when listening to TOEFL. 8) Lack of concentration or focus when listening to TOEFL. 9) Have limited mastery of foreign or unfamiliar vocabulary when listening. 10) The appearance of boredom when listening to TOEFL. 11) Easily distracted by sounds or other things when listening to TOEFL. 12) Tend to translate any foreign vocabulary when listening to TOEFL. 13) Have trouble catching or finding keywords when listening to TOEFL. 14) Busy alone with other activities when listening to TOEFL, for example playing writing instruments, taking notes, or doing other things.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

TOEFL Listening section is arguably a little more difficult than the other section. It is not surprising that many people find it difficult to improve their English Listening skills. Unlike the other TOEFL sections, listening skills cannot be improved in just a short time. It takes stages and processes that are gradual until someone can sort out the words that are heard well. Listening is the most difficult part of the TOEFL test in most people's view. For the structure section and reading we can anticipate by understanding grammar material and master a lot of basic vocabulary, then practice a lot do the TOEFL standard questions. Difficulty in doing TOEFL listening questions is a fairly complex activity, meaning that there are many aspects and many factors that influence it both external or internal.

Internal factors include the listener's physical condition and the listener's psychological condition. The physical condition of a listener is an important factor that determines the success and quality of listening. These factors are interrelated, in other words, that reading difficulty is influenced by one another. External factors include environmental conditions (physical environment and social environment). Environmental factors have a big influence on the success of the listening process. Environmental factors in the form of the physical environment and social environment.

As good listeners, we should know and understand what factors influence the listening process and try to minimize them, so that listening can run smoothly and optimally. Listening is an important activity in everyday life, not only in school but wherever we are. Be a good listener so that we can increase our knowledge and knowledge, and strengthen the brotherly

relationship between humans, because one of the objectives of listening is to communicate and to get information.

Suggestion

TOEFL is a test to test how well participants understand English. Before taking the TOEFL exam, the test-takers are expected to prepare everything as early as possible. Unlike the other sessions, listening skills cannot be improved in just a short time. It needs stages and processes that gradually until we can sort and understand from every word heard with good. Start learning listening from now. Enrich vocabulary us, then learn a lot to listen to listening material and try to understand each word and sentence English that we hear. In improving listening skill, it takes a long process and a lot of input. Learning at school alone, will not be enough to fulfill that because we don't have enough time to learn English in class which is only 1 or 2 hours a week.

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