

TOEFL Score of Tadris Chemistry Students at UIN Antasari in Achievement of CEFR Standard

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Abstract

This paper aims to explain the TOEFL score achieved by Tadris Chemistry students at UIN (State Islamic University) Antasari Banjarmasin towards achieving the CEFR (Common European Framework Reference) standard. The sample is 20 Tadris Chemistry Students for the Teaching of Chemistry Class, Odd Semester 2022/2023. The method used is descriptive method. The results show that of the 20 students taking the TOEFL, in listening session, there are 6 people (30%) below the CEFR level and 14 people (70%) getting the A2 level. The results of the score obtained in structure and written expression from 20 students get the A2 level. The score results in this reading comprehension session, all participants get A2 level so that 100% of students get A2 level. For the total TOEFL scores obtained from 20 students, the result obtained is in the range of 310-443 (A2 level according to the CEFR level standard).

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Introduction

Recently, universities have a significant role in creating agents of change (Hartono, 2021; Lubis *et al.*, 2019). This includes producing students with global competitiveness and having the ability to speak English. One of UIN Antasari's scientific philosophies is to have a global perspective. Scientific studies are enriched with global insights due to modern life in the era of information and globalization. In this way, UIN Antasari is projected to be able to contribute to global civilization. It aligns with UIN Antasari's vision, "Unggul dan Berakhlak". UIN Antasari is a superior higher education institution, which is unique and stands out in integrative scientific studies between Islamic sciences and modern sciences, lives up to national values, is locally based, and has a global perspective in the Southeast Asia region in 2024.

UIN Antasari has a UPB (Language Development Unit) as a technical implementer in designing and organizing language programs. UIN Antasari's Strategic Plan for 2020-2024 shows UPB has learning, training, and translating duties. UPB always strives to make quality improvements, as evidenced by improvements in various aspects, such as minimum standards for student language skills, recruitment of teaching staff, improvement of teaching materials, improvement of aspects of the learning process, and learning outcomes. UPB also provides TOEFL test services.

UPB is strongly committed to being a model and reference of excellence in the fields of language learning and testing, as well as translation, by implementing ISO 21001:2018 - Management System for Educational Organizations. To achieve these objectives, management will: (1) Organize technology-based language learning; (2) Organize technology-based language tests; (3) Organize learning of Al-Qur'an tahsin; (4) Translate academic and scientific texts and manuscripts. Mastering English is not just a requirement but a valuable tool for science, particularly in the chemistry department of UIN Antasari. It enhances students' understanding of English texts, making it easier to comprehend and analyze chemistry literature, including books and articles.

UIN Antasari chemistry education students come from various backgrounds. They are from the natural sciences, social sciences, and religion departments. Therefore, their language knowledge is diverse. Some subjects taught in chemistry education are "English for Chemistry" with two credits and "Teaching of Chemistry" with three credits. In both courses, they are taught about grammar, chemistry reading, articles, teaching chemistry in English, and many other things. These courses are designed so students can understand chemistry literature, write chemistry articles in English, and teach chemistry in English.

The reason why it is essential to master TOEFL is that it is a requirement for obtaining a bachelor's degree. One of the requirements for completing college is to take the TOEFL test and have the scores required by the university. Apart from that, for students who have plans to continue their studies at a higher level through scholarships, mastering TOEFL is an important asset. Having a TOEFL score is, of course, the main requirement. TOEFL measures how well test takers can use academic English across various language skills (Chapelle *et al.*, 2007; Brown dan Abeywickrama, 2019).

Human resources is an essential factor in increasing the competitiveness of the nation. The definition of human resources is not in terms of quantity but instead in

quality. This explains why countries with abundant available human resources do not have high competitiveness because the quality is still low (Winoto, 2009; Gultom, 2015).

A high TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) test score indicates a person's English proficiency. Among the low competitiveness of human resources and the responsibility of universities is the problem of mastering foreign languages, especially English. English proficiency is fundamental to increasing competitiveness in work and the academic world (Sulistyo et al., 2018; Azhar and Iqbal, 2019). The TOEFL score is a graduation requirement for UIN Antasari students. Chemistry students must have a TOEFL Prediction/ITP score of at least 400 based on the strategic plan of the Tarbiyah and Teacher Training Faculty of UIN Antasari for 2020-2024. Husni and Susilowati (2011) confirm that English proficiency has significant meaning because it is essential in education and work, and many people deepen their English skills. The test is carried out so practitioners, including students, can easily understand and develop in the language field (Piccardo et al., 2011).

TOEFL must be implemented in universities for various purposes. This research determines the TOEFL score by emphasizing three essential aspects: listening comprehension, structure and written expression, and reading comprehension. After the score is obtained, the author analyzes it using the CEFR (Common European Framework References) method to measure a person's level of proficiency in English. The use of proficiency tests for foreign languages, one of which is TOEFL, is starting to be widely used in many institutions in Indonesia. One type of TOEFL widely used is the TOEFL PBT (Paper Based Test), with a range of scores from 310 – 677 obtained by answering TOEFL questions totaling 140 questions in about 115 minutes (approximately 2 hours) (Anggreningrum, 2020).

TOEFL test is a test that measures general English language competency. In other words, the TOEFL test is a form of language proficiency test. The language proficiency test or proficiency test itself is not tied to a particular curriculum, a particular discussion topic or a language skill, but on the contrary a language proficiency test is a test that measures overall language ability (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019). The TOEFL test itself is believed to be a measure of ability in listening, reading, speaking and writing in English. According to Herwkitar et al., (2012), the TOEFL test has become very popular because almost all universities throughout the world apply TOEFL score requirements for prospective master's and doctoral students with a minimum average score of 500 or 600 depending on the major and university policy.

Hartanto & Inayati (2016) state that various English tests commonly used in TOEFL are one reference to measure English language proficiency. One of the places that organizes and uses the TOEFL proficiency test is UIN Antasari Banjarmasin. However, the reality on the ground shows that the TOEFL scores obtained by most of the students taking the test are not in accordance with the CEFR standard. For instance, a significant number of students who scored high on the TOEFL test were placed in lower CEFR levels, indicating a clear discrepancy.

Neumann et al. (2019) reveal that a certain level of language proficiency is required for academic success; therefore, higher education institutions generally have English proficiency requirements. Warfield et al. (2013) argue that TOEFL is

sometimes used to indicate students' academic success and how well they perform during their studies at university. TOEFL is the most widely used English language proficiency assessment by universities. Of the 138 institutions surveyed, 100% used TOEFL as an admission requirement, and 86% of IEP (Intensive et al.) students took test preparation courses either as part of their institution or as additional courses. (Ling et al., 2014; Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019).

This test is commonly used as a filter in admission standards by national and international universities (postgraduate programs), several state-owned companies, and foreign companies. TOEFL is the most popular test in many countries worldwide to measure English language skills (Lubis et al., 2019). English language skills, especially TOEFL scores, apply not only to scholarships and studying at certain universities but also to employment and promotions (Utami & Pirmansyah, 2018).

Based on the results of interviews with students of Tadris Chemistry at UIN Antasari, students think TOEFL is a difficult thing to do because they rarely or have never attended TOEFL training before, even though the TOEFL test is one of the graduation requirements at UIN Antasari based on the strategic plan of the Tarbiyah and Teacher Training Faculty of UIN Antasari for 2020-2024. From the background of the problems stated above, the researcher is interested in examining students' TOEFL scores for achieving CEFR standards. This research is conducted by observing the TOEFL score obtained by students for achieving CEFR standards in Table 1.

Table 1. CEFR(Common European Framework Reference) Standard of TOEFL

Levels	TOEFL score
A2(Waystage/Elementary/basic user level)	310-459
B1(level threshold/intermediate/independent user)	460-542
B2(vantage/upper intermediate/independent user)	543-626
C1(effective operational proficiency/advance/proficient user)	627-677

Source: [Anggreningrum , 2020](#)

Research Methods

The method used in this study was a descriptive method, with a specific focus on the student's TOEFL scores and their alignment with the CEFR standards. The data was collected through observation during the TOEFL prediction test activities in UIN Antasari and the final scores obtained by students. The sample, consisting of 20 Tadris Chemistry Students for the Teaching of Chemistry Class, Odd Semester 2022/2023, was carefully selected to ensure a representative group. The data, in the form of scores, were analyzed using a quantitative approach.

Data analysis was performed using statistics. Descriptive statistics were chosen according to the research objectives, which would provide an overview of the TOEFL abilities of Chemistry students at UIN Antasari. The statistical formula used was the percentage to find out more specific information relating to the scores obtained by students toward achieving the CEFR standard.

Result and Discussion

The score result obtained during the TOEFL prediction test at the language development unit of UIN Antasari Banjarmasin can be seen in Table 2. In the listening session attended by 20 students, six people (30%) were below the CEFR level, so it can be said that they did not pass the CEFR standard. There are 14 of the 20 test takers, so 70% of students with the A2 level are obtained. A2 level is the basic ability level (elementary) according to the standard CEFR level. The score, including at the A2 level, is 38-46 (conversion score). At this level, students understand simple conversational texts and grammar for beginners. These participants' low level of ability can be caused by the lack of competitiveness of students, especially in English. Participants revealed that their English language skills were an obstacle apart from time constraints. This is related to English vocabulary (Schmitt et al, 2011).

Students' strategies utilized to overcome problems on the TOEFL test and students' motivation to minimize mistakes on the TOEFL test also influence the score of the TOEFL (Anggraini, 2023). Students frequently have difficulty getting high marks; the cause of this may be a lack of preparation (Masfufah, 2018). Therefore, it is hoped that English language training, especially TOEFL, will increase competitiveness (Pandriandi, 2018). The research conducted by Pandriandi results in 94% of respondents having low competitiveness. 4 indicators, including English proficiency, measure competitiveness.

Table 2. TOEFL Score of Tadris Chemistry Students for Teaching of Chemistry Class Odd Semester 2022/2023

Student	Listening	Structure	Reading	TOEFL score
1	43	29	36	360
2	41	37	32	367
3	46	42	45	443
4	44	41	45	400
5	33	35	33	337
6	38	38	31	357
7	37	35	36	360
8	33	29	31	310
9	33	35	33	337
10	37	35	35	357
11	37	35	31	343
12	38	35	33	353
13	44	35	35	380
14	46	35	32	377
15	41	37	31	363
16	41	37	35	377
17	41	37	33	370
18	43	37	32	373
19	43	37	33	377
20	43	37	33	377

Source: Data processed, 2021

The scores obtained in structure and written expression are from 20 students. Two people (10%) do not pass the CEFR. 18 of the 20 (90%) test takers got an A2 level there. A2 level is the basic ability level (elementary) according to the

standard CEFR level. The score ranges from 34-42 (conversion score). Students can understand and determine the forms of active and passive sentences in simple sentences at this level. The low level obtained can be caused by the presence of obstacles that can hinder the development of student's English proficiency, namely the lack of independent efforts by students to learn and practice English, the lack of student participation in courses/English language training, and lack of introduction to students about the English proficiency test (TOEFL) (Noni et al., 2019). Students still have problems participating in this activity, namely the limited time and English proficiency, especially in the vocabulary section. It is necessary to conduct training to improve the participants' English vocabulary (Nugroho, 2023).

The scores in the reading comprehension session are from 20 students. All participants get an A2 level, so 100% of students get an A2 level. The A2 level is the basic ability level (elementary) according to the standard CEFR level. The score ranges from 31 to 47 (conversion score). Students understand simple texts at this level and find information about everyday life, such as e-mails, private messages, invitations, and alerts. Many obstacles can cause students to have low scores and believe the TOEFL quality objectives according to CEFR standards (Anggreningrum, 2020).

This is also confirmed by research conducted by Sesriyani (2019), saying that students experience difficulty completing TOEFL questions in the reading section. This is due to a lack of English vocabulary, feeling sleepy when reading long passages, and difficulty finding the main ideas in the reading. Azhar and Iqbal (2019) also say almost the same facts that poor vocabulary, complicated grammar, and not being familiar with the types of questions in TOEFL are the factors that cause students to have difficulty in solving questions in the Reading section of TOEFL Research conducted by Mahendra et al. (2020) also reveals that lack of interest in reading scientific literature, low motivation to read, and lack of mastery of vocabulary are the causes of students difficulty on questions.

Students comprehend a text only when they understand the information in the text. Therefore, reading comprehension can be defined as understanding the written word and the content being read in a text (Febriani, 2019). The students' most challenging reading comprehension question type is inference. Students need to improve their vocabulary and sentence structure. They do not know reading comprehension question types (Zuhra, 2019).

E-learning can increase the TOEFL score. E-learning is also necessary for the TOEFL learning process. The TOEFL preparation process is more efficient because it studies the preparation, does the pretest directly, and views the information and posttest schedule. TOEFL e-learning needs to be further developed to be displayed optimally and responsively on students' mobile devices to make learning easier (Alfa et al, 2020). Next, one way to increase professionalism in mastering English is to achieve adequate scores on TOEFL to show proficiency in English. Thus, these training and mentoring activities are essential. It is hoped that the results of this training will provide a better understanding and knowledge regarding TOEFL (Mustasyfa et al., 2022). Through providing this material, participants gain additional insight and knowledge about TOEFL (Fitria, 2020).

For the total TOEFL scores obtained from 20 students covering listening, structure written expression, and reading comprehension sessions, the results

obtained are that 20 students get TOEFL scores in the range of 310-443. This score range includes A2 level according to the CEFR level standards. Then, it was determined that 100% of the participants had an A2 level (310-459). At this level, students can understand sentences and expressions often used in specific fields, such as personal/family information. In addition, students are also able to understand simple communication.

Based on the result above, students' English level is still low. If it is related to learning outcomes, they have difficulty understanding TOEFL material. The learning outcome of this subject at the level of understanding in cognitive is that students can provide explanations about TOEFL material: Listening, Structure and Written Expression, and Reading Comprehension. This is in line with research conducted by Saifuddin and Nurcahyani (2018) said that the learning objectives rely on their interpretation, which should reflect based on the cognitive domain. The learning objectives used in the syllabus show that it is expected for the students to understand/identify the TOEFL materials covering listening comprehension, structure and written expressions, and reading comprehension and that these objectives reflect the understanding stage of learning taxonomy.

Conclusion

The inference from this study is that the TOEFL score from listening, structure, written expression, and reading comprehension sessions, as well as the overall score, is obtained, and most of the chemistry students are at the A2 level according to the CEFR standard. Thus, their English skills are still at the elementary level. At this level, students can understand sentences and expressions often used in specific fields, such as personal/family information. In addition, students are also able to understand simple communication. It is recommended that UIN Antasari expand the English language program to enrich students' English language skills. This will not only help them understand learning material, especially in TOEFL, but also enhance their overall academic performance and future career prospects.

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