

**STRUCTURE AND WRITTEN  
EXPRESSION SECTION ON PAPER-BASED  
TOEFL: PERCEIVED DIFFICULTIES BY  
MANAGEMENTS' STUDENTS OF  
UNIVERSITAS MUHADI SETIABUDI**

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**Abstract**

English language ability is one of the skills that must be possessed by college students, including Management's students. Having good English skills will open broad opportunities for increasing the competency and expertise of Management's students. One form of recognition of good English skills is to have a high TOEFL score. However, getting a high TOEFL score is still a challenge for Management's students. Facts in the field show that many Managements' students find it difficult to achieve high scores on the TOEFL test. The most common form of difficulty is the problem in answering questions related to the structure and written expression section in the Paper-Based TOEFL test. The purpose of this research is to investigate management's students' difficulties in the structure and written expressions section tested in the Paper-Based TOEFL. The population of this study is 80

Management's students of Universitas Muhadi Setiabudi, and the sample is selected by using cluster random sampling. Data of the research are collected through tests and interviews. The result of the research finds that there are 8 items considered as the most difficult elements met by Management's students in the TOEFL test. These items are word order, parallel structure, singular and plural nouns, missing and extra words, articles, comparative and superlative, word choice, and word form. In addition, the findings also show that several factors influence Management's students' difficulties in the structure and written expression section. The factors are unfamiliarity with the TOEFL test, lack of practice, and lack of grammatical competence.

**Keywords:** TOEFL, Structure and Written Expression Section, Management's Students.

## **A. Introduction**

TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) is one kind of standardized test which is addressed for speakers in which English is not as their native language. As one of the English standardizes tests, TOEFL becomes one of the important tools in measuring English proficiency for non-native speakers. It is used to test the non-native ability to understand spoken English, to determine selected structural and grammatical sentences in standard written English, and to understand short English passages (Abboud et.al, 2011)

TOEFL, as a language proficiency test, takes several forms namely Paper Based Test (PBT), Computer Based Test (CBT), InternetBased Test (IBT), and Institutional Testing Program (ITP). Among those tests, a PaperBased Test is one of the familiar TOEFL tests taken by the test takers. The

working system in this type of test is to use sheets of question paper and answer sheets that must be filled with 2B pencil (Romadhon & Yunita, 2018). This test is divided into three main sections: listening comprehension, structure and written expression, and reading comprehension. The first section, listening comprehension, is used to assess the examinees' understanding in spoken English. It includes the ability to understand different types of English recording in the form of a short conversation, long conversation, and long talks. All of the items are presented in multiple-choice questions. Then, the examinees can continue to the structure and written expression section. This section aims to examine the examinees' ability to identify English grammar sentences correctly. It involves an ability to choose the correct answer that completes the sentence and an ability to recognize underlined word or phrase that is not appropriate in the sentence. Finally, reading comprehension is used to assess the examinees' ability to understand English reading passages. It involves finding a topic, answering the main idea in the passage, recognizing the organization of ideas, answering stated and unstated details, guessing meanings of difficult words from structural clues and context clues, looking for general and specific information. (Samad et.al, 2017). For Management's students, TOEFL is helpful to support their academic skills in teaching and learning bussiness. Having a higher TOEFL score indicates that the students might have good English skill. They can use that skill to communicate fluently with their colleagues from other countries, attend an international seminar, find a lot of English sources, and even fulfill a requirement to continue their studies abroad. It cannot be rejected that TOEFL is used by many (overseas) universities

for their admission processes that must be fulfilled by prospective new foreign students. (Pyle, 2014). Furthermore, the scholarship programs also require that students must have the ability to speak English and be able to achieve the TOEFL score determined by each program organizer. Scholarship institutions also strengthen these requirements, including scholarship institutions of the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia, in this case, LPDP (Indonesia Endowment Fund for Education).

However, there are still many management's students who fail to get good results in the paper-based TOEFL. From the informal interview result done with some students, it is found that most of the students agree that one of their biggest hurdles is section two of the test, which examines the structure and written expression. Thus, they always feel the burden of doing this section. They also state that problems with grammar are thought to prevent them from getting a high score in TOEFL.

## **B. Literature Review**

Theoretically, Structure and Written Expression is one of the sections in the TOEFL test which focuses on English written form. It aims to measure the examinees' ability in recognizing appropriate language used in standard written English. (Zhuang, 2008). This section encompasses two parts: Part A and Part B. Part A, structure, consists of 15 incomplete sentences. Underneath each sentence, there are four words or phrases, marked (A), (B), (C), and (D). The examinees need to choose one correct option to fulfill the sentence. After completing part A, the examinees continue to Part B, which is the written expression. This part has 25 sentences in which each sentence has four underlined words/phrases in the

sentence. These four underlined words/phrases are marked (A), (B), (C), and (D). The examinees have to identify errors/mistakes from the underlined word/phrases to correct the sentence (Ananda, 2016).

Generally, there are two main points that are tested in this section; structure and written expression. Each point has some specific aspects to be answered by the test takers. The further variables for each point can be described below:

### **1. Structure**

In this part of the test, the examinees are asked to choose the right answer from the four-word/phrase options provided beneath the sentence.

Example:

Geysers have often been compared to Volcano ----  
----- they both emit hot liquids from below the  
Earth's Surface.

(A) due to

(B) because

(C) in spite of

(D) regardless of

The correct choice is (B) (Abboud et.al, 2011).

There are five aspects of structure to be tested in PBTTOEFL: (1) WIAS/What is a Sentence (It is based on the presume that a clause consists of only one subject and one verb), (2) Word choice (It tests students to choose the correct word or phrase appropriate to the sentence), (3) Word order (It requires students to choose the appropriate word order in a sentence), (4) Verb form (It concerns with the verb form aspects based on the English Tenses), (5) Parallelism (It means choosing the parallel structure in the sentence) (Abboud et.al, 2011).

In addition, structure questions usually examine the following items:

**a. Sentence Structure**

The sentence structure questions assess the examinees' ability to complete a sentence correctly.

**b. Word Order**

Word order questions consist of more detail-oriented sentence structure questions.

**c. Word Form**

Word form questions assess the examinees' ability to identify the correct use of word form in a given situation.

**d. Word Choice**

The word choice questions examine the examinees' ability in understanding idiomatic expressions, such as how to use prepositions with certain words.

**e. Missing or Extra Words**

The missing or extra word questions frequently examine the examinees' ability to recognize that a word is missing or that an extra word appears in a sentence (Hilke&wadden, 1997).

**2. Written Expressions**

In this section, the examinee will see that each sentence has four underlined words/phrases. He/she needs to figure out one underlined choice that is not correct. The example from this part can be explained as following:

Guppies are sometimes called rainbow fish  
A B

because of the males' bright colors.

C

D

The correct choice is (A)

Generally, there are some aspects to be tested in written expression. They are Word Form, Word Choice, Verbs, Parallel Structures, Pronouns, Singular/Plural Noun, Verbal (Infinitives, Gerunds, and Participles), Prepositions, Articles, Word Order, Comparatives and Superlatives, Conjunctions, and Other Types of Errors (Rogers, 2011).

In addition, there are ten aspects tested on this section. (a) Part of speech. It is defined as the class of word which consists of noun, verb, adverb, adjective, pronoun, conjunction, preposition and interjection; (b) Plural. It means more than one in terms of nouns; (c) Parallelism. It appears much more in part B than in part A. (d) Pronoun Errors. Pronoun is used to substitute a noun either singular or plural. (e) Prepositional Errors. It is considered one of the most difficult aspect in written expression part. (f) Verb form. Like in part A, in part B, problems with verbs also concern with choosing correct verb forms in terms of its tenses. (g) Deleted Words. It is a missing word that is needed to complete a sentence. (h) Word order. This aspect appears more in part A than in part B. (i) Article. Even though it appears in small percentage, article is considered the most difficult aspect in English grammar tests. (j) Conjunction. It is a connector to join a part of speech with another part of speech, a clause with another clause, and a sentence with another sentence.

Based on the explanations above, the researcher is inspired to research the problems experienced by management's students in the

structure and written expression of paper based TOEFL. The objectives of this study are to find out what kind of difficulties are faced by management's students in the structure and the written section of the paper-based TOEFL test and to figure out factors that affect the students' difficulties in the test.

### **C. Method of Investigation**

This research design is descriptive research. It aims to investigate and identify management's students' difficulties in the structure and written expression section of the Paper Based TOEFL test. This research uses mixed method research in which including both quantitative and qualitative data in the research. Both of these data provide a better understanding in answering the research questions. The quantitative data give details information to explain the first research question about Management students' difficulties in the structure and written section of TOEFL test in a numerical way. In other way, the qualitative data are applied to answer the second research question about the factors that influence management's students' difficulty in answering the structure and written expression section.

This research is done in the Management Department of Universitas Muhadi Setiabudi, Brebes. It is conducted at the first-grade Management's students of Universitas Muhadi Setiabudi . There are 80 students registered as the population of the research. They are divided into 2 classes; class A and class B. The population of this research can be seen as follow:

**Table 1. The Population of the Research**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Classes</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>
1	A	40
2	B	40
<b>Total</b>		<b>80</b>

To get the sample, the researcher employs a cluster random sampling. It is one of the sampling techniques in which the sample selection of group have similar characteristics.

In choosing the sample, the researcher choses one among two classes randomly by using two rolls of small paper, in which each contains one class. Finally, class A is chosen as a sample of this research. The researcher employs test and interview as the instrument of the research. The test is applied to discover the most difficult element in the structure and written expression section which is administered to 40 students. The sources of the test are adopted from TOEFL books such as. The test format is similar to the standard TOEFL test in the multiple-choice form. For this research, the researcher only employs the structure and written expression section. It is divided into two parts; part A and part B. Part A, structure (word completion), contains 15 questions. Meanwhile, Part B, written expression (error analysis), contains 25 questions. The total questions of the test are 40 questions, and the students have 25 minutes to accomplish the test.

Also, the items for each section in the test are based on several indicators that have been arranged appropriately. Further explanation can be seen in the following table:

**Table 2. Indicators of Structure and Written Expression Section of TOEFL test**

No	Indicators	Sub- Indicators	Questions Number
1	Structure	Sentences Structure	1,2,3
		Word Order	4,5,6
		Word Form	7,8,9
		Word Choice	10,11,12
		Missing and Extra Word	13,14,15
2	Written Expression	Word Form	16,17
		Word Choice	18,19
		Verbs	20,21
		Parallel Structure	22,23
		Pronouns	24,25
		Singular Plural Nouns	26,27
		Verbal (Infinitives Gerund, and Participles)	28,29
		Prepositions	30,31
		Articles	32,33
		Word Order	34,35
		Comparatives and Superlatives	36,37
Conjunctions	38,39,40		

The data of this research are collected through the structure and written expression section of TOEFL test and interview. In the test, the students are asked to choose the correct answer which consists of all indicators of structure and written expression section of TOEFL test. The test consists of 40 items and it is held on February 6, 2020. The students are given 25

minutes to answer the questions in the test. After that, the researcher collects the students' answer sheet and scoring the students' answers. Furthermore, the researcher also employs interviews with 5 students who get the lowest score in the test. It might be a representative from the sample in providing detail information about factors influence management's students' difficulty in structure and written expression section test. To calculate the students' score in the structure and written expression section of TOEFL test, the researcher starts by checking the answers given by the students. Furthermore, he divides the correct and incorrect answers. Then, he calculates the percentage of error for each indicator by using a formula by:

$$P = \frac{f}{N} \times 100\%$$

In which:

**P** = Percentage of error in each indicator

**f** = The number of incorrect answer in each indicator

**N** = Total number of students

#### **D. Findings and Discussion**

The researcher uses a test to collect the data about Management's students difficulty in structure and written expression section on the TOEFL test. After analyzing the test, the researcher finds the students' errors which are divided into two categories; structure and written expression. The followings are the result of data analysis of Management students' difficulties in the TOEFL structure sub-test.

**Table 3. Total Percentage of Part A and Part B**

<b>Test Part</b>	<b>Correct</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Incorrect</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Part	231	38%	369	62%

A				
Part B	442	44%	558	56%
<b>Total</b>	<b>673</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>954</b>	<b>59</b>

Table 3 demonstrates the total percentage of correct and incorrect answers for both part A and part B. For part A, the total percentage of students' incorrect answers is 62%. On the other side, part B gets a lower percentage of incorrect answers with 56%. The averages of students' incorrect answers from these two parts are 59%. In different circumstances, the total percentage of students' correct answers is 18% lower than the incorrect score with 41%.

**Word Order** also can be found from item number 6. In this item, 29 students choose incorrect answer varied from (A), (B), or (C). As a result, the total percentage of incorrect answer is 72%. It still indicates the students' understanding about word order is low.

**Parallel Structure** in the TOEFL test. The question of parallel structure is included in part B of the test. It has been put into item number 22 and 23. From the test result, it shows that most of the students can not be able to answer the questions correctly. The total percentage of incorrect answer is 90%. Only 4 students can choose correctly and 36 students fail to answer correctly. The total percentage of incorrect answer is 90% which indicated as one of the highest difficult item for management's students in the structure and written expression section.

**Singular and Plural Noun** has been used as one of criteria to be tested in the TOEFL test. It had been put in the item number 26 and 27. Related to question number 26, this question is still asking about

singular and plural noun. 36 students are unsuccessful to identify the correct answer. Only 2 students take (A) as the correct answer. And the rest of the students chose (B) and (D). The question for these criteria is provided in part A of the test. It is the the item number 13, 14, and 15. The result score for each item varies and the highest percentage of incorrect answer is in the item number 15 (90%). Also, this item is assumed as one of the most difficult questions. It is because most students get fail with 90% in percentage. It means that 36 students can not determine the right answer in the question. There are only 4 students who can guess the correct answer.

**Articles** become one criterion to be tested in part B. It is included in the item no 32 and 33. In this item, more than half of the students fail to choose the correct answer with 85% as the total percentage of incorrect answers. There are only 4 students who chose (A) as the correct answer.

**Comparative and superlative** also become one of the difficulties experienced by Managements' students in the TOEFL test. The students can not be to identify the use of correct comparative and superlative in a sentence. It is proved from the students test result which fail to get high score in the test. Most of the students can not be able to identify the use of correct comparative and superlative in the test. 85 % students can not be able to identify the correct answer, meanwhile only 15 % students can recognize correct answer.

**Understanding the Word Choice** in a sentence is also one of difficulty faced by management's students in the TOEFL test. It can be found from the students' test result which fail to choose the correct answer in the test. For item number 10, 30 students (75%) fail to determine the correct answer. There are

only 10 students (25%) who obtain the correct answer.

**Word Form**, the last difficult item experienced by management's students in the TOEFL test is word form. The questions for this item have been put in the question number 7 and 8. For this question, the highest percentage of student's error is 70%. Only 12 students choose the correct answer. 28 students fail to choose the correct answer. The researcher assumes that not many of them are aware of the use of correct word form in the question.

## **E. Conclusion**

From the findings of the research, it can be stated that management's students have difficulties in the structure and written expressions section on the TOEFL test. These difficulties become the major causes of students' failure in achieving this test successfully. The research findings reveal that there are 8 items considered as the most difficult elements in grammar use found in the TOEFL test. The items are word order, parallel structure, singular and plural noun, missing and extra words, article, comparative and superlative, word choice, and word form.

Besides, the findings also report that there are some factors which dominated the management's students' difficulty in the structure and written expression section of the TOEFL test. The factors are unfamiliarity with the TOEFL Test, lack of practice, and lack of grammatical competence.

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