

**ENGLISH STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES WITH PARALLEL STRUCTURE  
IN THE STRUCTURE AND WRITTEN EXPRESSION SECTION  
IN TOEFL TEST**

**THESIS**

*Submitted as Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements to Obtain Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) in  
English Language Education*



**By:**

**Annisa Purnama Sari**

**NIM: 18018087**

**Advisor:**

**Witri Oktavia, S.Pd., M.Pd.**

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE DEPARTMENT  
FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND ARTS  
UNIVERSITAS NEGERI PADANG**

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**HALAMAN PERSETUJUAN SKRIPSI**

**Judul** : English Students' Difficulties with Parallel Structure in the  
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**Nama** : Annisa Purnama Sari

**NIM** : 18018087

**Program Studi** : Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris

**Jurusan** : Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris

**Fakultas** : Bahasa dan Seni

Padang, 3 Februari 2023

Didetujui oleh,

Pembimbing



Witri Oktavia, S.Pd., M.Pd.

NIP: 198210192015042001

Mengetahui

Ketua Jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris



Desvalini Anwar, S.S., M.Hum., Ph.D.

NIP. 197105251998022002

**HALAMAN PENGESAHAN LULUS UJIAN SKRIPSI**

**Dinyatakan lulus setelah dipertahankan di depan Tim Penguji Skripsi  
Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris  
Fakultas Bahasa dan Seni Universitas Negeri Padang  
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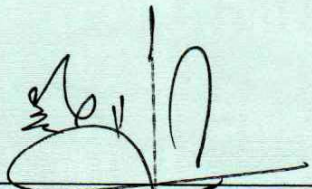
*English Students' Difficulties with Parallel Structure in the Structure and Written Expression  
Section in TOEFL Test*

**Nama : Annisa Purnama Sari**  
**NIM : 18018087**  
**Program Studi : Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris**  
**Jurusan : Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris**  
**Fakultas : Bahasa dan Seni**

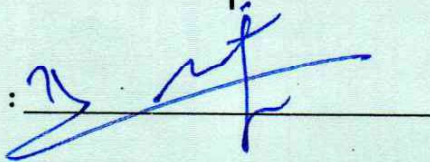
**Padang, 3. Februari 2023**

**Tim Penguji**

**1. Ketua : Delvi Wahyuni, S.S., M.A.**

: 

**2. Sekretaris : Dr. Yuli Tiarina, M.Pd.**

: 

**3. Anggota : Witri Oktavia, S.Pd., M.Pd.**

: 



**UNIVERSITAS NEGERI PADANG**  
**FAKULTAS BAHASA DAN SENI**  
**JURUSAN BAHASA DAN SASTRA INGGRIS**  
Jl. Belibis, Air Tawar Barat, Kampus Selatan FBS UNP, Padang. Telp/Fax: (0751) 447347

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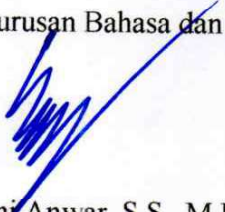
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Nama : Annisa Purnama Sari  
NIM/TM : 18018087/2018  
Program Studi : Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris  
Jurusan : Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris  
Fakultas : Bahasa dan Seni

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Diketahui oleh,  
Ketua Jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris

  
Desvalini Anwar, S.S., M.Hum., Ph.D.  
NIP. 197105251998022002

Saya yang menyatakan,



Annisa Purnama Sari  
18018087/2018

## ABSTRAK

**Sari, Annisa Purnama.** (2023). *English Students' Difficulties with Parallel Structure in the Structure and Written Expression Section in TOEFL Test*. Padang: English Department, Faculty of Language and Arts, Universitas Negeri Padang.

Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui kesulitan siswa bahasa Inggris terhadap struktur paralel dalam tes TOEFL. Penelitian deskriptif dengan pendekatan kuantitatif digunakan pada penelitian ini. Subyek penelitian ini adalah mahasiswa pendidikan bahasa Inggris di Universitas Negeri Padang tahun akademik 2019. Untuk mengumpulkan data, peneliti mengadakan tes tata bahasa. Dalam penelitian ini, data dianalisis dengan beberapa langkah, antara lain mengklasifikasikan jawaban siswa menjadi benar atau salah, menghitung nilai tes siswa, menghitung persentase kesulitan tiap keterampilan, dan menentukan tingkat kesulitan tiap soal. Hasil tes menunjukkan bahwa siswa mengalami kesulitan dalam menjawab soal-soal TOEFL yang berkaitan dengan struktur paralel pada bagian struktur dan ungkapan tertulis. Hal ini terlihat pada rata-rata nilai tes siswa yaitu 56. Struktur paralel dengan perbandingan merupakan keterampilan yang paling sulit dengan persentase 46,3%. Selain itu, keterampilan yang berkaitan dengan struktur paralel dengan konjungsi koordinat mendapatkan persentase kesulitan siswa sebesar 45,6%, sedangkan keterampilan yang berhubungan dengan struktur paralel dengan konjungsi berpasangan mendapatkan persentase kesulitan siswa sebesar 41%. Berdasarkan hasil penghitungan tingkat kesulitan soal, terdapat 2 soal dengan kategori sulit, 21 soal dengan kategori sedang, dan 7 soal dengan kategori mudah.

**Kata kunci:** TOEFL, Struktur dan Ekspresi Tertulis, Struktur Paralel, Kesulitan

## ABSTRACT

**Sari, Annisa Purnama.** (2023). *English Students' Difficulties with Parallel Structure in the Structure and Written Expression Section in TOEFL Test*. Padang: English Department, Faculty of Language and Arts, Universitas Negeri Padang.

The purpose of this study was to investigate English students' difficulties with parallel structure in the TOEFL test. Descriptive research with a quantitative approach is used in this study. The subject of this research was English education students at Universitas Negeri Padang in the 2019 academic year. To collect data, the researcher conducted a grammar test. In this study, the data were analyzed in several steps, including classifying student responses as correct or incorrect, calculating student test scores, calculating the percentage of difficulty in each skill, and determining the level of difficulty in each question. The test result shows that the students face difficulties in answering TOEFL questions related to parallel structure in the structure and written expression section. It can be seen in the average student test score, which is 56. Parallel structure with comparison is the most difficult skill with a percentage of 46.3%. On top of that, skills related to parallel structure with coordinate conjunctions get a percentage of student difficulty of 45.6%, while skills related to parallel structure with paired conjunctions get a percentage of student difficulty of 41%. Based on the results of calculating the difficulty level of the questions, there are 2 questions in the difficult category, 21 questions in the medium category, and 7 questions in the easy category.

**Keywords:** *TOEFL, Structure and Written Expression, Parallel Structure, Difficulties*

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The author recognizes that this thesis is far from faultless. Reader suggestions and constructive feedback are welcome to improve it. As a result, the author hopes that this thesis will be beneficial to other researchers and interested parties.

Padang, January 2023

Annisa Purnama Sari



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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTIONS

### A. Background of The Problem

English is an universal language since it is the primary language in the majority of the world's countries. English is spoken by an estimated 1 billion people across the world. English is the official language of 67 countries, and it is also the second official language of 27 countries (Nishanthi, 2018). Furthermore, English is one of the most significant international languages to study and learn. In Indonesia, English is a foreign language. However, it plays a crucial role in our society's daily life. This is reflected in the education sector in Indonesia. Students from junior high school to university study English as one of their subjects.

Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are the four skills that have to be mastered in English. Many different types of English proficiency tests may be used to assess students' English abilities. TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) is one of the most well-known in Indonesia. The Educational Testing Service (ETS) administers the TOEFL exam, which is intended to measure the English language proficiency of non-native speakers (Gear & Gear, 2006). Paper-based tests (PBT), computer-based tests (CBT), internet-based tests (iBT), and institutional testing programs (ITP) are the four types of TOEFL exams. The university may also administer a TOEFL-like, TOEFL-equivalent test or a TOEFL prediction through the language studies center or the language laboratory. This type of TOEFL test is administered locally by the university and is only utilized internally to assess students' English proficiency (Noviyenty, 2018:56).

Many universities in Indonesia require students who are interested in continuing their education at a higher level to have a TOEFL score. For students in West Sumatera who intend to further their educational level, such as from undergraduate to graduate school, the TOEFL exam is truly recommended. This test is also utilized for public reasons, such as applying for specific jobs in the country or overseas. In a limited context, The TOEFL is also required for undergraduate thesis examinations at Universitas Negeri Padang. Students who wish to take their thesis examination must have a TOEFL score of 475 in the English department and 400 in the non-English department.

Depending on the type of test taken, the TOEFL has several sections that are tested: listening, reading, grammar or structure, writing, and speaking. Listening comprehension section tests examinees' capability to comprehend spoken English in university settings. Speaking is a test that assesses examinees' ability to speak English effectively in the academic setting. Structure and written expression section is a test that measures the competence to identify specific structural and grammatical elements in written English. Reading comprehension section is a test that measures the ability of examinees to read and comprehend academic content written in English. At last, writing section is a test that assess the competence of examinees to write in English in an academic setting.

Many students have difficulties answering the TOEFL test. One of their difficulties is the structure and written expression (Atmojo, 2018: 170). He stated that many students face difficulty choosing between the proper answer that accomplishes the sentence correctly, and the underlined word or phrase that is incorrect. Wright and Sukur (in Tilana et al., 2019) emphasize that structure and written expression section is a primary issue for students taking the TOEFL test. As a result, students are frequently stressed by this part. In the English

Department at Universitas Negeri Padang, students in the 2019 academic year typically get all of the English skills and components. They have taken all grammar classes: basic grammar, intermediate grammar, advanced grammar, grammar for TOEFL, and functional grammar. Based on this fact, it can be inferred that the students are ready to take the TOEFL exam, specifically in the structure and written expression section. However, Universitas Negeri Padang English students admit that the second section of TOEFL test is one of the most difficult one (Hajri et al., 2018).

Reduced clauses, inverted subjects and verbs, subject-verb agreement, parallel structure, comparative and superlative form of the verb, passive verbs, nouns, pronouns, and prepositions are some topics that are tested in the structure and written expression section. The researcher observed ten previous studies related to student difficulties in the TOEFL structure and written expression section: Handayani, 2019; Akmal et al., 2020; Muhajir and Gani, 2018; Putra et al., 2020; Sari et al., 2021; Hajri et al., 2018; Fitri, 2017; Ananda, 2016; Tilana et al., 2019; and Yoshintha, 2021. Based on the findings of the research's observation of the results of the ten previous studies, which aim to identify what topics or items students have difficulty answering in the structure and written expression section of the TOEFL test, it can be concluded that parallel structure is the most frequent topic students have problems answering. According to Hajri et al. (2018), one of the most difficult topics in the structure and written expression is parallel structure. In detail, 71% of students struggle with parallel structures because they lack knowledge about identifying words based on their position in sentences. Handayani (2019) also discovered that parallel structure is the most difficult topic in Part B of the TOEFL written expression section.



In general, research on TOEFL learning specifically the structure and written expression has been done by previous researchers. First, Abboud and Hussein (2011) did research that focused on studying the Institutional Testing Program (ITP) with a more accurate investigation and analysis of the difficulties encountered by Iraqi international students in completing this test, which is considered one of the obligatory requirements to continue the study at university. As a result, 57 percent of students have difficulty with structure part and 47 percent have difficulty with written expression part . Second, Mufidah (2012) conducted a study at five different universities to assess English students' competence in structure and written expression on the TOEFL. Based on the research's findings, the average score of English students in the second section of the TOEFL test is 418, putting them in the beginner category. Then, Qonaatun (2019) conducted a study to find out which areas of the examinees make errors in the structure and written expression section and to find out the description of the examinees' errors in the TOEFL at JLC (Jims Language Course). As a result, JLC's TOEFL examinees still struggle with with the structure and written expression. In addition, Handayani (2019) has conducted research on nursing students' difficulties in the paper-based TOEFL in the structure and written expressions. Based on the study's findings, there have been eight topics identified as the most difficult aspects of the TOEFL test for nursing students. The topics were parallel structure, missing & extra words, singular and plural nouns, articles, word order, word choice, comparative and superlative, and word form.

This research and previous research have similarities, in which we are discussing the TOEFL test and the structure and written expression section. In the previous studies, the researchers focused on the abilities and difficulties of English or non-English major students in the structure and written expression of the TOEFL test. To differentiate the researcher's

position from the previous research, the researcher intends to conduct a study that aims to find out the English students' difficulties with parallel structure in the TOEFL test. Hence, the researcher wants to conduct research entitled “English Students' Difficulties with Parallel Structure in the Structure and Written Expression Section in TOEFL Test.”

## **B. Identification of The Problem**

Based on the background of the problem above, it is clear that students are still having difficulties with the TOEFL test, especially in the structure and written expression section. It can be seen that several problems can be researched regarding the structure and written expression section in the TOEFL test, such as students' ability, students' difficulties, students' errors in the structure and written expression section, and also students' difficulties with parallel structure in the TOEFL test.

## **C. Limitation of The Problem**

Based on the problems identified above, this study is limited to students' difficulties with parallel structure in the TOEFL test for English students in the 2019 academic year at Universitas Negeri Padang.

## **D. Formulation of The Problem**

The formulation of the problem in this research is what are the English students' difficulties with parallel structure in the TOEFL test?

## **E. Research Question**

Based on the description above, the researcher formulated the problem of the study as: “What are the English students’ difficulties with parallel structure in the structure and written expression in TOEFL test?”

## **F. Purpose of The Research**

This study aims to analyze English students’ difficulties with parallel structure in the structure and written expression in TOEFL test.

## **G. Significance of The Research**

This research has three significances. First, for students, the results of the study can help them to find out what mistakes they made in answering questions regarding the topic of parallel structures in the TOEFL test. So that the students can minimize facing difficulties in the TOEFL and help them to achieve the target score they want. Second, for lecturers or institutions, the results of this research can be used as guidelines for lecturers and institutions to overcome difficulties faced by students regarding the topic of parallel structures in the structure and written expression sections of the TOEFL test. Third, other researchers who want to conduct similar research might utilize this study as additional information and a reference for future research.

## **H. Definition of The Key Term**

To prevent misunderstanding in the reader's interpretation, the following are the keywords used in this research:

1. *TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language)* is a test that aims to assess non-native English speakers' fluency.
2. *Structure and Written Expression* is a test that measures the competence to identify specific structural and grammatical elements in written English.
3. *Parallel Structure* means using the same pattern of words to show that two or more ideas have the same level of importance.
4. *Difficulties* are the qualities or circumstances of being difficult to do, deal with, or understand.