

**Problems Faced by English Department Students in Taking Structure and  
Written Expression Section in TOEFL**

**THESIS**

*Submitted as a Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements to Obtain Strata One (S1)  
Degree*



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## ABSTRAK

Sarira, Nila, 2013: “Problems Faced by English Department Students in Taking Structure and Written Expression Section in TOEFL”. *Skripsi* FBS Universitas Negeri Padang

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui masalah-masalah yang dihadapi mahasiswa jurusan bahasa Inggris UNP dalam *TOEFL Structure and Written Expression* Section dan faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhinya. Penelitian ini adalah penelitian deskriptif. Populasi dari penelitian ini adalah mahasiswa tingkat tiga jurusan Bahasa Inggris tahun akademik 2010 yang telah mengambil mata kuliah Structure 1-3. *Sample* dipilih melalui teknik *clustering random sampling*. Berdasarkan hasil penelitian, ditemukan bahwa 71,43% mahasiswa mendapat kesulitan dalam menguasai materi yang diujikan dalam *TOEFL Structure and Written Expression Section*. Dari 32 skill yang diujikan, 27 diantaranya masih belum mereka pahami. Terdapat dua faktor penyebab: internal dan eksternal. Faktor internal yang menyebabkannya adalah kurangnya minat dan perhatian. Faktor eksternal adalah materi. Beberapa materi kurang dibahas karena keterbatasan waktu. Tidak adanya latihan dan pembahasan terhadap aturan dan keterampilan yang diujikan dalam *TOEFL Structure and Written Expression Section* turut mempengaruhi keberhasilan peserta dalam menyelesaikan tes..

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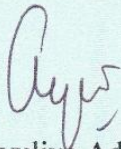
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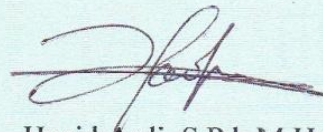
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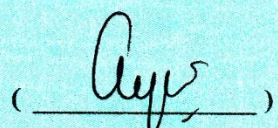
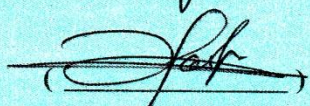
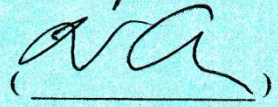
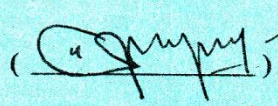
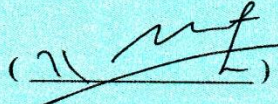
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STRUCTURE AND WRITTEN EXPRESSION SECTION IN TOEFL**

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Problem

TOEFL, standing for The Test of English as a Foreign Language, was firstly introduced in 1963 by ETS (Educational Testing Service). It was designed to measure the ability of nonnative speakers of English to use and to understand North American English as it is used in college and university. At first, the purpose of this program was for United States government's importance. At that time, TOEFL was as a stipulation in scholarship program, such as *Fulbright, the Agency for International Development, AMIDEAST, and Latin American Scholarship Program*. Around 2400 college and universities in United States and Canada asked the candidates to enclose their TOEFL score, academic record, and letter of recommendation as considerations in accepting new students.

Nowadays, TOEFL is widely used for different reasons around the world. In academic setting, TOEFL is one of the requirements to enter around 8500 universities in America, Canada, and other 130 countries in the world (ETS, 2012). Besides, it is also used in business world. Many corporations, banks and institutions also use TOEFL as one of the steps in the process of selecting new employee, since TOEFL can be a parameter to check one's language mastery.

In Indonesia, most universities also ask the students to take TOEFL when entering the graduate and post-graduate program. Brawijaya University, for example, asks the

TOEFL score more than 500 for the master degree, and up to 525 for doctoral degree. Some departments even require the students to pass a certain score of TOEFL as the prerequisite for their S1-degree.

In Padang State University, some of the faculties and departments also require the students to take the TOEFL before completing their study. English Department is one of the departments that obligate the students to take the test before completing their S-1 degree. The minimum score determined is 475. The department has no special program to prepare the students for the international test, but it tries to include skills and materials tested in some subjects. The subjects include the four macro skills and other micro skills that will help students master the language, so the students will not get difficulty in achieving the score determined by the department.

However, many English students cannot pass the score; they have to take the test several times because of their low score. Based on the information from Balai Bahasa officer, many English students got scores below 475. In December 2011, 72% of the test-takers could not pass the score determined by the department. In April 2012, 75% of the test takers also got scores below 475. Some of the students even got the score below 400. On the other hand, none of students from Mathematic and Natural Science Faculty who took the TOEFL preparation class for only 50 hours have scores below 400. It is such an irony, since English students have learned English for at least four years, that they are considered having more experience and knowledge than others.

Based on the test in December 2011, most English students got lowest score in reading section. 12 out of 18 test-takers (around 67%) got score 29 to 46, which 4

others get lowest score in structure and written expression section, The remains, two students got the same lower score in the end of with the average score 43. In structure and written expression section, students got score 27 to 49, with the average score 45.

The TOEFL that was held in April 2012 shows that most of students got the lowest score on structure and written expression sections. From 16 test-takers, 12 of them got lowest score in that section. The mean score of the students in that section was 44, while in listening section it was 46 and in reading section was 45. Based on the TOEFL score conversion table, the score of 44 means 20 of 40 questions are correctly answered. The data shows that 10 out of 16 test-takers got score below 44. It means that there are still many students who cannot recognize the English grammar well.

It is assumed that there are several possible causes that may contribute to the low score of TOEFL. The first, students have no sufficient knowledge of the three test component. Students may find difficulties in one section, two sections, or all of them. The second, TOEFL covers wide range of materials namely listening, structure and reading. Each section covers a huge problem area which has to be mastered. The third, students may not familiar with the test, so that they are lack of knowledge of the TOEFL type of questions and preparations before the test.

Based on the fact above, most students still have problems in TOEFL, seen from the low score gotten by the students. Therefore, a research on the problems faced by English department students in TOEFL needs to be conducted. By doing the research, it is hoped that the students and the department can solve the problems in the future.

Besides, it is hoped that it can give contribution to the teaching of each subject related to the TOEFL components.

### **1.2 Identification of the Problem**

Based on the explanation above, the problems causing the low score of the students' TOEFL can be identified. First, TOEFL covers three components that have wide range of materials. Students may have no sufficient knowledge of the three test components. Second, they probably were not introduced to the materials tested in TOEFL. Third, they may not familiar with the test, including the type of questions, the procedure, or the scoring system. Next, they may not be given variety of exercise. Therefore, some possible researches can be conducted. The analysis of the problems faced by English department students in taking the TOEFL test for each section could be done.

### **1.3 Limitation of the Problem**

From the identification above, this research is limited on the problems faced by English department students in taking structure and written expression section in TOEFL. Having good language grammar mastery will help someone to understand and produce English better. Besides, there is no research in this area yet.

### **1.4 Formulation of the Problem**

The problem of this research is formulated as following:

What problems were faced by English department students in taking structure and written expression questions in TOEFL and what factors caused the problems?

### **1.5 Research Questions**

The problem of this research was elaborated in the following questions:

- 1.5.1 Which sub-skills became problems for the English department students in TOEFL especially Structure and Written Expression section?
- 1.5.2 What factors caused the problems?

### **1.6 Purpose of The Research**

The purposes of the research are to find:

- 1.6.1 Sub-skills that became problems for the English department students in TOEFL especially Structure and Written Expression section.
- 1.6.2 Factors caused the problems in Structure and Written Expression section in TOEFL.

### **1.7 Significance of the Research**

The research was done in order to give a significant contribution to the English grammar teaching and learning process through knowing problems faced by students in performing structure section in TOEFL. The result of the research will be the consideration in the teaching process in Structure course.



## 1.8 Definitions of Key Terms

- TOEFL : Test of English as a Foreign Language, an international standard test to measure one's English language proficiency.
- Structure and Written Expression Section : A section in TOEFL that measure one's ability in structure and patterns used in formal written English.
- Problems : Materials and sub skills of the TOEFL structure and written expression section that had not been mastered by students shown by the low score for the sub skills.