



STUDENTS' PREDICTED VS. ACTUAL TOEFL SCORES: FINDINGS FROM A SELF-ASSESSMENT SURVEY

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore students' self-assessment of their English proficiency on the TOEFL test by predicting their anticipated scores with the actual results they achieved. The students performed a self-assessment consisting of a set of questionnaires about how they thought they would do on the TOEFL test, about their skills of listening, reading, grammar, and sentence structure, and their confidence when doing TOEFL practices and strategies. The results show that most students' predictions of their TOEFL scores were rather close. The responses to students' predictions indicate that some students think that they are less capable than they really are, while others seem to have a slight tendency to overestimate. Overall, the results indicate that the students need more personalized TOEFL learning strategies, with an emphasis on regular practice.

Keywords: English proficiency, TOEFL, self-assessment, predicted TOEFL score, learning strategies

INTRODUCTION

The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is widely recognized as one of the proficiency tests among non-native speakers. Some higher educational institutions in Indonesia set TOEFL as a graduation requirement. Having a satisfactory TOEFL score not only shows students' English proficiency but also can be used for gaining a scholarship abroad. To improve TOEFL score many students take TOEFL preparatory courses, focusing on reading, listening, speaking, and writing skills. Ultimately, a strong TOEFL score can enhance a student's academic profile and increase their chances of success in both local and international opportunities. A good TOEFL score can help students get more opportunities to get scholarships and can help them get jobs, since many global corporations demand their employees to have a good command in English



Research by Rezvani and Khadivikia (2025) on how IELTS and TOEFL applicants assess their own language proficiency provides a valuable foundation for this study. This study demonstrated that self-assessment of language proficiency, particularly in speaking, reading, and writing, showed substantial correlations with actual test scores, although self-assessments in listening and writing were relatively less reliable. These findings suggest that students' self-evaluation of their competencies in specific areas may be an effective indicator of their future performance in language proficiency assessments, though the less reliable self-assessments in listening and writing reveal that students need certain strategies to help them improve these skills. Meanwhile, in the present study, data were collected from students taking a preparatory TOEFL course only by administering a self-assessment survey on the exploration of students' self-assessment of their English proficiency on the TOEFL test by predicting their anticipated scores with the actual results they achieved is investigated including their skills of listening, reading, grammar, and sentence structure, and their confidence when doing TOEFL practices and strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Self-assessment refers to the process in which students take an active role in evaluating their own learning, achievement, and learning progress. It focuses on students' self-reflection rather than comparing their own performance with teachers' or assessors' judgments (Boud, 1995 cited in Boud & Falchikov, 2007).

Self-assessment plays an important role in helping learners assess their own abilities and also in identifying areas for improvement. When having a preparatory TOEFL course, It estimates their abilities in various domains like listening, reading, grammar, and sentence structure.

Self-Assessment in Language Learning

Self-assessment has been known as a valuable tool in language learning (Boud, 1995). This provides an opportunity for students to reflect on their abilities and foster their metacognitive awareness, which is supported for effective learning (Zimmerman, 2002). In the context of language proficiency tests like TOEFL, doing a self-assessment can provide an opportunity for students to perceive their abilities across various skills such as reading, listening, and speaking.



Accurate self-assessment can lead students to yield better learning outcomes, since students become more aware of their strengths and weaknesses, so that they will be able to make improvements on the specific areas in their learning (Tullis and Benjamin, 2011).

In the context of language proficiency tests like TOEFL, doing a self-assessment can provide an opportunity for students to perceive their abilities across various skills such as reading, listening, and speaking. Accurate self-assessment can lead students to yield better learning outcomes, since students become more aware of their strengths and weaknesses, so that they will be able to make improvements on the specific areas in their learning (Tullis and Benjamin, 2011). However, when doing a self-assessment, the results are not always accurate, as studies have shown; the tendency to overestimate or underestimate learners' abilities may occur, especially in high-stakes tests like the TOEFL (Arias, 2005). A study revealed that students' predicted scores often deviated from their actual performance, with overestimation being more common than underestimation (Riazi and Lodi, 2005).

Accuracy of Self-Predicted Scores

According to Falchikov (2005), there are several factors influencing the accuracy of predicting their own test performance. First, their past experiences, familiarity with the test format, and also the level of confidence in their abilities. A significant predictor of overestimation is confidence (Cizek, 2010). Individuals with low ability tend to underestimate their capabilities, whereas those with higher proficiency often overestimate (Krunker and Dunning, 1999).

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of feedback in this process. Feedback on the self-assessment given to students enables them better be able to adjust their learning strategies and expectations (Veenman et al, 2006) and Nicol and Mcfarlane-Dick (2006) highlighted the role of formative assessment in improving students' performance.

STUDY DESCRIPTION

The participants in this study were taken from a class taking a preparatory TOEFL course, and the number of participants was 12 university students with different English level abilities. As part of the study, students in the third week of the course were tasked with conducting a self-



assessment in March 2025. The self-assessment involved their ability in listening, reading, ability to answer grammar, in identifying sentence structure, in doing TOEFL questions, their confidence in doing the TOEFL test, and their prediction of the TOEFL score they will gain. The questionnaires of self-assessment employed a response format of the Likert Scale 1-5 : low-verlow-medium-high-very high and disagree-disagree-pretty agree-agree-very agree

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Students self-assessment (%)

Criteria	very low	low	medium	high	very high
My ability in listening	0	25	50	25	0
My ability in reading	0	8	50	42	0
My ability in answering grammar	0	42	50	8	0
My ability in identifying sentence structure	0	33	33	34	0
My ability in doing TOEFL questions	0	16	67	16	0
I am confident enough when doing TOEFL test	0	16	67	16	0
	Very disagree	disagree	Quite agree	agree	Vey agree
I believe I can get TOEFL score above 450	0	25	42	25	8
I often practice doing TOEFL practice outside the class	0	42	33	25	0
I understand the strategies doing TOEFL	0	16	59	25	0

Table 2. Predicted TOEFL Score and Actual TOEFL Scores

Respondent	Predicted score	Actual score
EK	500	487
AAO	400	420
IAF	550	500
DSPH	500	560
RW	550	587
NHO	500	477
RY	400	450
KLZ	455	487
RT	400	450
DA	480	450



ASN	450	430
PNS	450	480

Table 1 shows how well respondents think they are preparing for the TOEFL test. They rate their skills in listening, reading, grammar, sentence structure identification, overall TOEFL question handling, confidence in scoring above 450, frequency of practice outside of class, test confidence, and understanding of TOEFL strategies. The data is broken down into four rating levels: low, medium, high, and extremely high. This shows what percent of respondents put themselves at each level for each criterion.

The area of listening reached the highest percentage (50%) of respondents who believe they have medium ability, while a smaller percentage (25%) believe they have low ability, and a smaller percentage (25%) believe they have great ability. This implies that the respondents are quite sure of their listening skills, but some of them need improvement

The area of reading ability gained the highest percentage (50%) of respondents who think their reading comprehension is at a medium level, while just 8% think it is low, and 42% rate it as high. This trend shows that students are fairly confident in their reading comprehension skills, but there is still a gap between those who estimate their skills highly and those who perceive them as lower.

The respondents who assess their mastery of grammar and sentence structure as average showed the highest percentage (50%), but 42% think their grammar skills are poor. This indicated that grammar might be a weak point for many respondents. Students may need more practice to better in this area.

The majority of respondents (67%) think they are moderately prepared for the TOEFL test, which means they think they can handle the questions. Meanwhile, low and high percentages 16% respectively, think they are not sure whether they can handle TOEFL questions, and some are sure that they can handle the general test format.



Confidence level shows that 67% of respondents who answered the survey feel quite ready to take the TOEFL test, and 16% of them know TOEFL strategies well, which shows that they are quite prepared in these non-technical areas. Students are sure they can take the test and understand techniques, but the fact that they rated their grammar and sentence structure skills lower than their other skills suggests that they may still need to work on these technical areas to do better overall.

Among the responses to the statement 'they could get a TOEFL score above 450', there were 42% of the respondents showed "quite agree" with the statement, while 25% "agree" and 8% "very agree". There were 25 10% of respondents who thought they "disagree" with the statement, indicating that the majority of students feel capable enough of achieving a TOEFL score above 450. This implies that many student feel optimistic about their potential outcomes whereas some students need for assistance to have some work to improve their TOEFL skills.

The respondents show disagreement with the statement "I often practice doing TOEFL practice outside the class," which means they do not engage in sufficient TOEFL practice outside the classroom. There were another 33% "quite agree" and 25% "agree", showing that a fair number of students practice on their own, but it is not necessarily a consistent or frequent habit for the majority. Meanwhile, there were still 42% of respondents who showed that they lack of practice. These imply that half of the respondents are not actively practicing outside of class in their preparation efforts. Indeed, independent practice is needed in developing in refining TOEFL-specific skills, and the lack of practice may hinder their ability to reach their potential.

Among responses to the statement "I understand the strategies for doing TOEFL", there was 59% respondents showed that they quite agree with the statement, whereas 25% of the respondents showed an agreement. However there was 16% of the respondents agree with the statement. These mean that a significant portion of students has a general understanding of TOEFL strategies. While most students acknowledge the importance of strategies, fewer feel confident in fully understanding them.



CONCLUSION

Based on the results of a self-assessment survey it indicates there are a lot of students who are somewhat sure about their TOEFL skills in listening, reading, and general use, although there are still big gaps in grammar, sentence structure, and independent practice among the students. This implies that some students need to work on the areas of their weaknesses and improve their grammar and sentence structure analysis skills to give themselves a better chance of doing well. Also, practicing more outside of class and learning more about TOEFL tactics could help them feel more confident and do better overall. Mostly, the students are relatively ready for the TOEFL exam, but there are several areas where they clearly need to improve, and the use of a self-assessment regularly can also be beneficial for students to evaluate their learning progress.

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