

DESIGNING TOEFL TRAINING SYLLABUSES FOR NON-ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS OF UNIPDU JOMBANG (A STUDENTS' NEEDS ANALYSIS)

Achmad Fanani¹
Unipdu – Jombang¹
akufanani@gmail.com¹

ABSTRAK

TOEFL test adalah tes Bahasa Inggris berstandar internasional yang mengukur kemampuan bahasa Inggris akademik para petutur bahasa Inggris non-native. Penelitian ini dimaksudkan untuk mendesain silabus untuk pelatihan TOEFL yang memenuhi kebutuhan mahasiswa dari jurusan non bahasa Inggris UNIPDU Jombang yang berkemampuan bahasa Inggris kurang. Secara umum isi dari silabus berdasar analisis kebutuhan siswa adalah sebagai berikut: 1. *Listening comprehension: PART A: meaning questions, suggestion, prediction, implication, inferences, PART B: topics of conversations, details of conversations, PART C: topics of talks/lectures, details of talks/lectures;* 2. *Structure and Written Expression: a. Incomplete sentences: conjunctions, comparisons, subject missing, adjective clauses, b. Underlined words: count/non-count nouns, banana rule, adjectives, prepositions, noun-pronoun agreement, singular/plural nouns;* 3. *Reading Comprehension and Vocabulary: References, passage organization, exception, inferences, topics, main ideas.*

Kata kunci: EPT, students' needs, syllabuses

Abstract

The TOEFL test is an internationally accepted standard of English that measures the academic English proficiency of a non-native speaker of English. This research is aimed at designing TOEFL training syllabuses and workbooks that meet the needs of non-English department students of UNIPDU Jombang with low level of English proficiency. In general, the contents of the syllabuses based on the students' needs analysis are as follows: 1. Listening comprehension: PART A: meaning questions, suggestion, prediction, implication, inferences, PART B: topics of conversations, details of conversations, PART C: topics of talks/lectures, details of talks/lectures; 2. *Structure and Written Expression: a. Incomplete sentences: conjunctions, comparisons, subject missing, adjective clauses, b. Underlined words: count/non-count nouns, banana rule, adjectives, prepositions, noun-pronoun agreement, singular/plural nouns;* 3. *Reading Comprehension and Vocabulary: References, passage organization, exception, inferences, topics, main ideas.*

Keywords: EPT, students' needs, syllabuses

A. INTRODUCTION

The TOEFL test is an internationally accepted standard of English that measures the academic English proficiency of a non-native speaker of English. TOEFL (TEST OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE) measures the ability of non-native speakers of English to use and

understand English as it is spoken, written and heard in college and university settings. (www.ets.org/toefl).

The first and most important factor to be considered when constructing teaching materials is the learners. If the points of the materials are relevance, interest, motivation, and meeting specific students' needs, then clearly syllabus developers must ensure they know their learners well. Any consideration of syllabus or materials design must begin with a needs analysis.

This research is aimed at designing TOEFL training syllabuses that meet the needs of non-English department students at UNIPDU with low level of English proficiency. An important advantage of specifying the target readers is contextualization. A key criticism of commercial materials, particularly those produced for the world-wide market is that they are necessarily generic and not aimed at any specific group of learners or any particular cultural or educational context. Thus by specifying the target readers, the problem of lack of 'fit' of the syllabus will be able to overcome.

B. FINDINGS

1. The results of question items analysis

a. Listening Comprehension

After conducting an analysis on 300 listening questions in Part A. Listening Section (Short Conversations), it is found out that nine problems are present in this part. Out of them, five are regarded as commonly found problems: meaning question, implication, inference, suggestion, and prediction.

In Part B Listening Section (Longer Conversation), there are 81 questions analyzed. Among the questions, it is identified that 6 kinds of problems exist. However, there are only two problems that can be said as commonly found in this part.

In part C Listening Section, there are 119 questions analyzed. Among the questions, 5 kinds of problems are identified, and only two problems are categorized as commonly found in this part: details and topic.

b. Structure and Written Expressions

1) Incomplete Sentences

Questions number 1 to 15 in Structure and Written expressions section are called 'incomplete sentences'. Here the test takers are required to complete a sentence with one of four possible answers provided. In this type of question, out of 150 questions analyzed, 35 problems are identified and nine problems can be categorized as commonly found problems: Adjective clauses, conjunctions, verbs, subject missing, S+V missing, comparisons, adverbs, participial phrases, and appositives.

2) Underlined Words

Questions number 16 to 40 are underlined words. The test takers are to choose the incorrect words/phrase among four underlined words/phrases. There are 250 questions analyzed. Out of them 37 problems are identified. There are 16 problems can be said as commonly found problems. They are adjectives, prepositions, noun forms, singular/plural nouns, articles, adjective clauses, passive voice, adverbs, subject-verb agreement, conjunctions, noun-pronoun agreement, count/non count nouns, banana rule, word order, tenses and phrasal verbs. The problems can be grouped into seven groups: sentence patterns, phrasal construction, connectors, verb tenses, preposition, word classes, and agreement.

c. Reading Comprehension

After analyzing 500 reading questions, it is found out that 12 problems exist. Out of them, eight are regarded as commonly found are obtained.

problems: vocabulary, details, reference, topic, exception, inference, passage organization, and main idea.

2. The students' weakness points

After conducting the test to the respondents based on the common problems found in EPT, the following results

a. Listening Comprehension

1) Listening: Part A

In part A, it is found out that the respondents had difficulty on all kinds of problems. The following are the students' weakness points from the most problematic to the least one: *Inference, Meaning, Question, Suggestion, Prediction, Implication.*

2) Listening: Part B

In part B Listening Section, as discussed earlier, there are two common types of problems: topics and details. Out of 44 respondents, 39 students had trouble figuring out the conversational topics. The following are the students' weakness points from the most problematic to the least one: *Topics, Details.*

3) Listening: Part C

In Part C, the most difficult problem for the respondents is details of the talks/lectures where only 6 students (13.64 %) had no problem on it. The following are the students' weakness points from the most problematic to the least one: *Details, Topics.*

b. Structure and Written Expression

1) Incomplete Sentences

The most problematic question for the respondents is that on participial phrases. There were only 2 students (4.55 %) who could answer the questions well. The following are the students' weakness points from the most problematic to the least one: *Participial Phrases, Comparisons, Subject Missing, Conjunctions, Adjective Clauses, S+V Missing, Appositives, Adverbs, Verb Missing.*

2) Underlined words

Out of 44 respondents, only 1 student (2.27 %) could answer the questions. The least troublesome problem is subject-verb agreement. Here 25 students (56.82 %) could answer the questions well. The following are the students' weakness points from the most problematic to the least one: *Count/Non Count Nouns, Noun-Pronoun Agreement, Adjectives, Prepositions, Banana Rule, Tenses, Singular/Plural Noun, Articles, Phrasal Verbs, Word Order, Conjunctions, Adverbs, Noun Forms, Adjective Clauses, Passive Voice, Subject-Verb Agreement.*

c. Reading Comprehension

Locating references is the most difficult problem for the respondents. The least difficult problem is that on details of the passage. The following are the students' weakness points from

the most problematic to the least one: *References, Exceptions, Inferences, Referring to the Passage, Topics, Main Ideas, Vocabularies.*

C. THE IMPLICATION ON THE SYLLABUSES MAKING

1. The syllabuses

Concerning that this study would like to build teaching materials which help students get better scores on EPT, the following course rationale is constructed.

This course is designed for the students who would like to take TOEFL test or any tests like EPT. This course seeks to enable the students get TOEFL score of 475 up. It teaches the problems (in Listening, Structure, and Reading) which are commonly found in EPT. This course is designed to give the students the materials which are suitable to their strengths. It provides them with many practices resemble to the actual questions in EPT, in order that they will be familiar with the question formats. It also seeks to develop the students' skills in independent learning outside the classroom.

The content of the course will depend on the learners' proficiency levels (Richards, 2003: 148). The information gathered during needs analysis will contribute to the planning of course contents..

Finally, considering the common problems found, the weakness points of the students on EPT, and the number of meetings allocated for each section/parts, the following problems will be included in the teaching process (the complementing materials will include the practices on other commonly found problems that can be self-studied by the students).

a. The suggested syllabuses for 20-hour training

Considering the number of meetings allocated, the number of common problems found and the students' weakness points, all problems can be accommodated in the teaching process with the following topical breakdowns.

Section 1. Listening Comprehension (5 meetings)

1. Part A: 3 meetings
 - Meeting 1: meaning questions
 - Meeting 2: suggestion, prediction
 - Meeting 3: implication, inference
2. Part B: – 1 meeting
 - Meeting 4: topics of conversations, details of conversations
3. Part C: – 1 meeting
 - Meeting 5: topics of talks/lectures, details of talks/lectures

Section 2. Structure and Written Expression (5 meetings)

1. Incomplete sentences: – 2 meetings
 - Meeting 6: conjunctions, comparisons,
 - Meeting 7: subject missing, adjective clauses
2. Underlined words: – 3 meetings
 - Meeting 8: count/non-count nouns, banana rule
 - Meeting 9: adjectives, prepositions
 - Meeting 10: noun-pronoun agreement, singular/plural noun

Section 3. Reading Comprehension and Vocabulary

1. Common problems in TOEFL Reading: – 3 meetings
 - Meeting 11: reference, passage organization
 - Meeting 12: exception, inferences
 - Meeting 13: topics, main ideas

b. The suggested syllabus for 30-hour training

In general there is no significant difference between the syllabus for 20-hour training and that for 30-hour. The main difference is that on the composition of problems in Structure and Written expressions and Reading Comprehension where there are more problems accommodated. The process of selecting the contents of the syllabus is still the same: Considering the number of common problems found, the students' weakness points, and the number of meetings allocated for each section.

The syllabus for the 30-hour training is thus as follows:

Section 1. Listening Comprehension (7 meetings)

- 1) Part A: – 4 meetings
 - Meeting 1: meaning questions
 - Meeting 2: suggestion
 - Meeting 3: prediction
 - Meeting 4: inference, implication
- 2) Part B: – 2 meetings
 - Meeting 5: topics of conversations
 - Meeting 6: details of conversations
- 3) Part C: – 1 meeting
 - Meeting 7: topics and details of conversations

Section 2. Structure and Written Expression (7 meetings)

- 1) Incomplete sentences: – 3 meetings
 - Meeting 8: conjunctions, comparisons
 - Meeting 9: subject missing, S+V missing
 - Meeting 10: adjective clauses, participial phrases
- 2) Underlined words: – 4 meetings
 - Meeting 11: articles, banana rule
 - Meeting 12: adjectives, prepositions
 - Meeting 13: noun-pronoun agreement, tenses
 - Meeting 14: singular/plural nouns, count/non count nouns

Section 3. Reading Comprehension and Vocabulary (5 meetings)

- Meeting 15: vocabulary
- Meeting 16: reference, passage organization
- Meeting 17: details, exception
- Meeting 18: inference
- Meeting 19: topics, main ideas

D. CONCLUSION

An important advantage of specifying the target readers is contextualization. A key criticism of commercial materials, particularly those produced for the world-wide market is that they are necessarily generic and not aimed at any specific group of learners or any particular cultural or educational context. Thus by specifying the target readers, the problem of lack of 'fit' of the course book will be able to overcome.

This research is aimed at designing TOEFL training syllabuses that meet the needs of non-English department students of UNIPDU Jombang with low level of English proficiency. The main problem faced by the teachers in giving training on TOEFL is the time constraint. They usually have very limited time to teach while at the same time they have many topics to deliver. Therefore they often have difficulty deciding which topics that should be given and which ones are not. The problem is even worse when the students have low proficiency of English.

In relation with the nature of TOEFL questions, it can be concluded that the questions are aimed at assessing the readiness of the students in studying in college or university. The listening and reading sections concern with three academic skills: taking notes, paraphrasing, and summarizing. The grammar section tests the knowledge of the students in building good English sentences.

REFERENCES

- _____. 1998. *TOEFL Practice Test workbook*. ETS (Educational Testing Service), Princeton.
- _____. 2002. *TOEFL: Test Preparation Kit Workbook*. ETS (Educational Testing Service). Princeton.
- Angeles Linde Lopez. 2008. "To What Extent Does Grammar Knowledge Account for Competence in FL Reading Comprehension in University Students?" *RESLA* 21 181-200.
- Barry, K. and L. King, (2nd Edit.) (1997) *Beginning Teaching And Beyond* Australia: Social Science Press.
- Johns, A. 1991. *English for specific purposes: Its history and contribution*. In Celce-Murcia, M. (Ed). *Teaching English as a second or foreign language*. MA: Heinle & Heinle. Boston.
- Kellough, R. and N. Kellough (1999) *A Guide to Methods and Resources*. Prentice Hall. Ohio.
- Long, M., 1996. *Task Based Language Learning*, University of Hawaii ESL department, spring term. Hawaii.
- Richards, J. C. and T. S. Rodgers. 1986. *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching: a Description and Analysis*, Cambridge Teaching Library. Cambridge.
- Ross N. Kenneth. 1994. *Sample Design for Educational Survey Research*. UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning. New York.
- Sharpe, J. Pamela. 2000. *Barron's How To Prepare for The TOEFL*. 9th edition. BinaRupa Aksara. Jakarta.
- Sharpe, J. Pamela. 2007. *Barron's How To Prepare for The TOEFL iBT*. 12th edition. BinaRupa Aksara. Jakarta.