

English Proficiency of Students at Politeknik Negeri Balikpapan Based on TOEIC

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Abstract

English language proficiency is generally measured by English competency scores such as TOEFL and TOEIC. To be able to apply the right learning patterns for students of Politeknik Negeri Balikpapan (Poltekba) for the purpose of mastering the TOEIC, an analysis of their English proficiency is needed by measuring their TOEIC scores. This analysis can be used as a reference for English lecturers in providing relevant learning materials according to the needs of the students and the industrial world. The research method used is qualitative-quantitative because it focuses on analyzing the TOEIC scores of the students. The researchers conducted analysis on the TOEIC scores as the data and explained them descriptively. The data used in this analysis are TOEIC scores from 291 students. The scores were mapped into 6 levels of English proficiency. The results of this study describe the level of English proficiency and the comparison between mastering Listening and Reading Comprehensions by the students at Politeknik Negeri Balikpapan.

Keywords: English proficiency, listening, reading, TOEIC

Introduction

English proficiency of college student is in a high demand of an industry. Many National companies have prerequisite English language skills as one of the requirements that must be met by an applicant. Higher education also requires English language skills for its graduates and new postgraduate students. English language proficiency is generally measured by the English competency test scores such TOEFL, TOEIC, and others. According to Richardson, Gina and Michele Peters (1995) TOEIC is Ideal for students and professionals looking for fast-track prep for the Test of English for International Communication, used by more than 4,000 corporations worldwide to measure English Language Proficiency.

With the increasing of global economy and work culture, English is one of the requirements to compete at the international level and become a requirement for companies to find competent workforce. Therefore, job applicants are asked to create an attractive profile which shows that they are capable of participating on an international scale. By having a TOEIC certificate, the opportunity to work in foreign companies will be greater.

There are many stakeholders that prioritize TOEIC than TOEFL. This is because TOEFL is more directed to the academic field as one of the requirements to continue study to a higher level. TOEIC, in contrary, is currently used as one of the requirements for someone to apply for a job. Related to this issue, Politeknik Negeri Balikpapan seeks to provide provisions for students to qualify as job seekers. In addition, the form of questions on TOEIC is more equivalent to the ability of Poltekba students because it is more directed to the ability to communicate in industrial world, making it easier for students to achieve scores that are in line with company standards as Fauziati (2016) stated that TOEIC is specifically designed to measure English language skills for daily communication in the context of work in an international environment.

Politeknik Negeri Balikpapan as a vocational education has vision and mission to produce alumni who have skills and ready to compete in the industrial world. Today, many national and international companies require each applicant to have good English language skills as measured by the achievement of a TOEIC score. It will be very difficult for job applicants who have passive English skills to be able to compete with applicants who have active English communication skills, as it already stated by Harmer (2001) that good English is an entry requirement for much tertiary education in a global market where English gives the user a competitive advantage.

Based on the explanation above, it is important for the researchers to find out how is the proficiency of Poltekba students in mastering English measured by their TOEIC scores. This aims to formulate the basis for English lecturers to develop their teaching materials and meet the students' needs. It is also expected that with this research, the researchers find out relevant strategies applied in order to increase students' TOEIC scores. Further, the TOEIC scores of the students can be used by the institution as a reference to determine the appropriate programs and materials and evaluate the learning outcomes that have been done in class.

Theory and Method

TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication)

According to the Educational Testing Service (2010) the TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication), which was developed in 1979, is intended to measure someone's proficiency in English at the intermediate and advanced levels. TOEIC is a standardization of English proficiency in workplaces throughout the world. For almost 40 years, TOEIC has become the standard for measuring English proficiency in the workforce. At present, TOEIC has been used in 14,000+ companies, government institutions and English learning programs in more than 160 countries. Every year more than 7 million people take the test.

The purpose of TOEIC is more varied than other tests. TOEIC is used for 3 uses, there are: (1) to measure employees' English proficiency, promotion and recruitment requirements, (2) to measure students' English language standards, so that teachers can provide appropriate lessons, and (3) to design employee training programs, employee recruitment and promotion. (Yuliant, 2011).

Based on research and strict standards, TOEIC is specifically designed to measure the ability of individuals to communicate using English in their daily lives. TOEIC examines in detail in 4 areas of communication such as listening, reading, speaking and writing. The TOEIC test has also been mapped to CEFR so that it can provide the comprehensive and comparable data needed to evaluate individuals accurately and objectively regardless of their background. The TOEIC program consists of:

- 1. TOEIC Listening and Reading Test*
- 2. TOEIC Speaking and Writing Tests*
- 3. TOEIC Bridge*

TOEIC for Educational Institution

TOEIC measures students' English proficiency in 4 language areas with scores that have been mapped on CEFR. Based on in-depth research, TOEIC provides comprehensive and comparable data that can be taken into consideration in making decisions when accepting, mapping abilities and debriefing students or the students who can also indirectly show the effectiveness of the English learning program that has been given.

TOEIC is very helpful in achieving the success of an institution. With the TOEIC score, the teacher or lecturer is able to analyze the ability of their students or the students who are used as a basis for consideration in determining learning targets to improve the students' English language abilities as a whole. As a result, the graduates that have create will become workforce which are ready to work and can enhance the reputation of the institution in the eyes of the company.

Listening Section in TOEIC

This section aims to test one's ability to understand conversations in English. In this section of the test is consist of 100 questions and divided into 4 parts, there are the revelation in the form of pictures (photographs), and questions (questions and responses), short conversations (conversations) and short dialogues (short talks) that are played through cassettes or CDs. Test takers will listen to conversations and questions in English and answer them according to their understanding.

<i>Photographs</i>	<i>10 questions</i>
<i>Question – Response</i>	<i>30 questions</i>
<i>Short Conversations</i>	<i>30 questions</i>
<i>Short Talks</i>	<i>30 questions</i>

Reading Section in TOEIC

This section consists of three sessions that examine a person's ability to understand discourse in English. The participants of the test will be given 100 questions consisting of filling parts of incomplete sentences (incomplete sentences), replacing wrong words (error recognitions) and answering questions from story questions (reading comprehensions). Test takers read various readings and answer questions based on these readings.

<i>Incomplete sentence</i>	<i>40 questions</i>
<i>Error Recognition & Text Completion</i>	<i>12 questions</i>
<i>Reading Comprehension</i>	
- <i>Single Passage</i>	<i>28 questions</i>
- <i>Double Passage</i>	<i>20 questions</i>

TOEIC Score

The TOEIC Listening and Reading test score is determined from the number of correct answers which is then converted to a rating scale. The test participant's score report will contain a Listening Comprehension score scale from 5 to 495, a Reading Comprehension score scale from 5 to 495, and a total score scale from 10 to 990. The total score scale is a combined number of Listening Comprehension and Reading Comprehension scores.

The test scores will indicate a certain level of English language skills possessed by each student. This score can be used as proof of a student's English skills when applying for a job. In addition, the TOEIC scores from the students can be used by institutions as a reference to determine the appropriate programs and materials, and can evaluate the learning outcomes that have been done in class (Sudijono, 2001).

TOEIC score can be converse into six levels, they are: Novice (score for 10 – 250), Elementary (score for 255 – 400), Intermediate (score for 405 – 600), Basic Working Proficiency (score for 605 -780), Advance Working Proficiency (score for 785 – 900), and General Professional Proficiency (score for 905 – 990).

Table 2.1 TOEIC Conversion Score Based on CEFR

CEFR Level	TOEIC Listening & Reading Score	General CEFR Level Description
C1	945-990	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. - Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. - Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. - Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
B2	785-940	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. - Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. - Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
B1	550-780	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. - Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. - Can produce simple connected text on topics, which are familiar, or of personal interest. - Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
A2	225-545	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). - Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. - Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
A1	120-220	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. - Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has.

		- Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.
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The data for the research were from English competency test scores (TOEIC) taken by Poltekba students in sixth semester. The data obtained by the researchers were in the form of TOEIC scores. They were analyzed to the extent of skills mastering between Listening and Reading comprehension that they have taken based on scores on CEFR map.

To obtain the data, the researchers used documents. In this study, the researchers used documents as data collection instruments. Documents are a type of data source that involves any citation that aims to test the research, such as articles, books, etc. Documents of TOEIC certificates of students were classified according to their score levels. From these levels, their skills in mastering English were mapped.

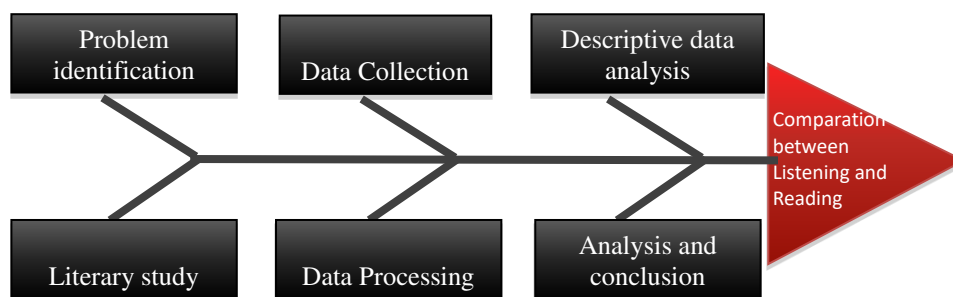


Figure 2.1 Research Flow Chart

The data were analyzed after the data collection process. The analysis focused on obtaining student's TOEIC score after taking the test. In the analysis process, the data were analyzed through the following steps: (1) Identification of the student TOEIC scores, (2) Classification of TOEIC ability levels, (3) Analysis of Listening and Reading comprehension mastery abilities.

Findings and Discussion

TOEIC Data from the Students of Politeknik Negeri Balikpapan

Politeknik Negeri Balikpapan, especially the Language Centre (UPT Bahasa), has conducted a TOEIC test for Poltekba students in May 2019, the TOEIC test is one of the requirements that must be fulfilled by final year students before the inauguration. The TOEIC test was attended by 291 students from 5 Study Programs, they are (1) Banking and Finance, (2) Hospitality, (3) Electrical Engineering, (4) Mechanical Engineering, and (5) Civil Engineering. The data can be seen in the following table:

Table 3.1 TOEIC Participant

TOEIC Participant Based On Mayor	
Mayor	Test Taker
Banking and Finance	29
Hospitality	58
Electrical Engineering	87
Mechanical Engineering	58
Civil Engineering	58
<i>Grand Total</i>	291

The scores show a very varied value that the average of Poltekba student could only achieve a score between 205 - 300 which was indicated by a total of 33% or 97 of 291 students. From the total number of students who took the TOEIC test, there were 66% or 193 students who scored < 400, the results showed that the ability of Poltekba students had not yet reached the standards that had been set by both the Institution and Industry, which was a score > 400. The scores that reached the standard is only 34% or only 98 students. The data can be seen in the following table:

Table 3.2 TOEIC Score Range of Poltekba Students

TOEIC LR		
Range TOEIC Score	Number of Candidate	Percentage
10-100	0	0%
105-200	14	5%
205-300	97	33%
305-400	82	28%
405-500	41	14%
505-600	33	11%
605-700	9	3%
705-800	9	3%
805-900	5	2%
905-990	1	1%
Total	291	100%

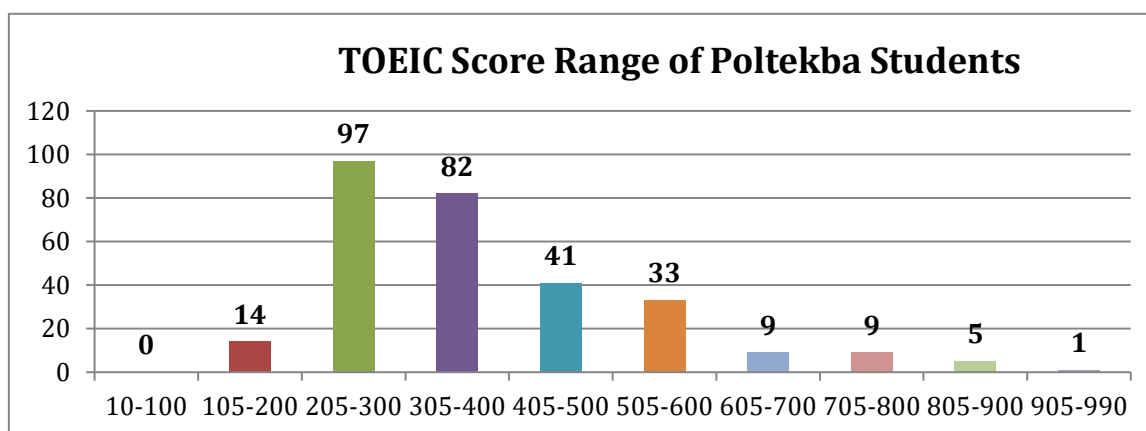


Figure 3.1 Graph of TOEIC Score Range of Poltekba Students

Levels of Student English Proficiency Measured from the TOEIC Score

As an objective measurement tool for English language skills, Listening and Reading tests on TOEIC can be used for: (1) Students, to find out their level of progress and standards for becoming productive worker, (2) Job seekers, to join the world of work or find new positions, and (3) Workers, for purposes of promotion, placement, assignment abroad (Sibarani, 2011).

TOEIC scores can be categorized into 6 (six) levels, from the lowest to the highest, they are: (1) Novice, (2) Elementary, (3) Intermediate, (4) Basic Working Proficiency, (5) Advance Working Proficiency, (6) General Professional Proficiency. From the tests that have been taken, the following level of English language skills of Poltekba students based on TOEIC scores are:

Table 3.3 English Proficiency Level Based on TOEIC Score

<i>Can Do Level</i>	<i>Result</i>
<i>Novice</i>	54
<i>Elementary</i>	139
<i>Intermediate</i>	74
<i>Basic Working Proficiency</i>	17
<i>Advance Working Proficiency</i>	6
<i>General Professional Proficiency</i>	1
<i>Grand Total</i>	291

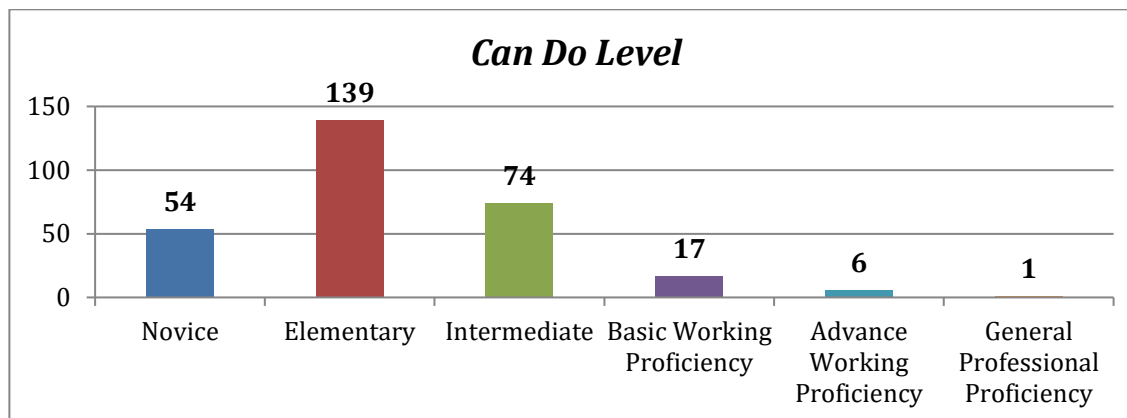


Figure 3.2 Graph of English Proficiency Level Based on TOEIC Score

Based on the graph above it can be concluded that from 291 students who took the TOEIC test, the average student had an Elementary level ability, which was indicated by a total of 139 students, or 47% of the total participant. This number is of course far from the standards that had set by the Institution, because based on this provision, Poltekba students must be able to reach the Basic Working Proficiency level as one of the conditions for them to be able to compete in Industry. Nowadays, foreign industries or companies, especially in Balikpapan, set a standard for TOEIC score at least 450, so that when viewed from the Polytechnic students' TOEIC results above, it only about 24% of students are able to meet these requirements or standards.

Proficiency Comparison between Listening and Reading Comprehension

Listening comprehension items included in the TOEIC test are designed to measure understanding of spoken English in real-life situations; and reading comprehension items are designed to measure examinees' ability to comprehend types of materials that people in the business-world use, including manuals, reports, forms, notices, advertisements, periodicals, memoranda and so on (Wilson, 2000).

Based on tests that have been taken by Poltekba students, there are very varied results in each study program, the average student has better ability in the Listening section, indicated by the average score achieved is 224. While for the Reading Comprehension section is still far from the maximum score, the average student score reaches only 156. The data can be seen in the following table:

Table 3.4 TOEIC Score Range of Poltekba Students

TOEIC LR	Mayor	Test Taker	Listening			Reading			Total		
			Min	Avr	Max	Min	Avr	Max	Min	Avr	Max
Poltekba Student	Banking and Finance	29	110	258	450	95	178	340	240	436	790
	Hospitality	58	70	195	425	60	136	315	165	332	740
	Electrical engineering	87	105	245	495	70	174	410	190	419	870
	Mechanical engineering	58	100	225	460	85	154	425	200	379	870
	Civil engineering	58	100	205	490	65	140	460	185	345	950
<i>Grand Total</i>		291	70	224	495	60	156	460	165	380	950

Based on the table above, it can be seen that the ability of the students is more likely to master Listening than Reading. This is caused by the difficulty of students in working on the number of questions in reading comprehension with limited time. In addition, their difficulty in understanding texts or essay due to their minimum vocabulary mastery also becomes a failure factor in working on the problems in reading comprehension section.

Conclusion

Based on analysis, it can be concluded that the TOEIC results of the students of Politeknik Negeri Balikpapan have an average score in range of 200 - 400, with a total of 213 from 291 students. This score indicates that the English Language skills of Poltekba Student are still under the standard of institution and industry which determine a minimum score of 450. The level of English proficiency of Poltekba students is still at the Elementary and Intermediate levels. This is still low because it only shows basic English or beginner level skills. At this level, the English language proficiency is limited only to mastering general vocabulary, not the advanced level of communicating with broader topics. In other words, they are not familiar with topics that lead to the business world. The Poltekba students are more likely to master listening than reading. It is caused by the difficulty of students in working on the number of questions in reading comprehension with limited time and the difficulty in understanding texts or essays. Their vocabulary mastery is also become a failure factor in working on problems in reading comprehension.

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