An Analysis on the Impact of TOEFL Course Program on English Proficiency Level of Final Year Polytechnic Students in Politeknik Pertanian Negeri Payakumbuh

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Abstract. This study aims to evaluate the impact of the TOEFL program implemented for Polytechnic students in improving their English proficiency. This research was conducted in Politeknik Pertanian Negeri Payakumbuh. The background of this research is based on the significance of English mastery as one of the graduation prerequisites and as preparation for entering the workforce. The research method employed is a quantitative approach using a pretest and post-test design. The research sample was formed from 26 students who participated in the TOEFL program for one semester. The participants were eighth-semester students of the Computer Engineering Technology Study Program at Politeknik Pertanian Negeri Payakumbuh. Data were collected through institutional TOEFL tests administered before and after the program implementation. The data indicate that the TOEFL training program significantly improved students' English proficiency and listening skill was the skill that experienced the highest improvement.

Keywords: Course Program; English Proficiency; Final Year Students; Polytechnic Students; TOEFL.

1. INTRODUCTION

English proficiency is one of the essential competencies for students in the era of globalization, especially for those who are about to complete their studies and enter the workforce or pursue higher education. One of the most commonly used indicators of English proficiency is the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) score. TOEFL is considered important for several reasons, particularly for individuals who wish to continue their education, work, or reside in English-speaking countries. Many universities in English speaking countries require a TOEFL score as an evidence of English proficiency. This test demonstrates the readiness on an individual to participate in academic activities conducted in English.

Additionally, TOEFL is also a requirement for scholarships. Many international scholarship programs, such as Fulbright or LPDP, include TOEFL scores as part of their selection criteria — and a high score can be an added advantage. TOEFL is also required for job applications. Several international or multinational companies request TOEFL scores for positions that demand active communication in English. Furthermore, in some cases, TOEFL is used as a requirement in immigration or visa application processes, especially those related to study or work purposes. In short, TOEFL serves as an objective benchmark to assess how well an individual masters English skills, particularly in listening, reading, writing, and speaking.

Several universities have integrated TOEFL preparation classes as part of their strategies to enhance graduate quality. However, the effectiveness of such programs, particularly for final-year students, has rarely been systematically investigated. Considering that final-year students often face academic workload and time constraints, it is necessary to examine the extent to which TOEFL classes genuinely impact the improvement of their English proficiency.

In addition, TOEFL learning at the polytechnic level is still relatively uncommon. The heavy academic and practical workload in each study program at vocational higher education institutions often causes English learning, particularly TOEFL, to become a lower priority. Although vocational higher education focus on developing practical skills and job readiness, English proficiency—such as that measured by TOEFL—should still be considered essential, as a TOEFL certificate is often required for graduation, further studies, and even job applications. The research questions of this research are about how effective is the TOEFL class program in improving the English skills of final-semester students; which area of English language skills improves the most after taking the TOEFL class program (listening, structure, or reading); third, how are the students' TOEFL score equivalent to Common European Framework References (CEFR).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

TOEFL

The TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) is an internationally standardized assessment for measuring English skills of non-native speakers. It includes three parts: Listening Comprehension, Structure and Written Expression, and Reading Comprehension. Developed by the United States-based Educational Testing Service (ETS) (Brown, 2004), the TOEFL is widely used as an entrance requirement for universities in English-speaking countries, as well as for visas, scholarships, and employment. There are several versions of the TOEFL which include TOEFL iBT (Internet-Based Test) which is the most common and modern version, testing four language skills—Reading, Listening, Speaking, and Writing (Educational Testing Service (ETS), 2020),TOEFL PBT (Paper-Based Test) which is a written version used in places without internet access; TOEFL ITP (Institutional Testing Program) which is aimed for internal institutional goals and job applications.

TOEFL preparation programs often include training in vocabulary building, grammar mastery, reading comprehension techniques, listening strategies. As learners engage in TOEFL-like tasks, they develop fluency, accuracy, and strategic competence. TOEFL is not

only a tool for academic selection but also helps boost confidence in using English. Permatasari et al. (2024) implies that English test preparation program enable learners to enhance English proficiency and confidence to use English for effective communication. Furthermore, it is an international benchmark used by more than 11,000 institutions in 150 countries (Educational Testing Service (ETS), 2020). TOEFL is also considered to be helpful to improve students' critical thinking skills, particularly in academic contexts (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996). According to Brown (2004), the TOEFL's role in English language learning can motivate students to improve their overall skills. This test encourages an integrative, results-oriented approach to learning. Effective TOEFL programs integrate skill-based instruction, practice tests, explicit strategy instruction, and feedback (Hughes, 2003).

English Proficiency

Definition and The Importance of English Proficiency

Renandya et al. (2018) defines English proficiency as the ability of someone to use English for various purposes of communication and the speakers who are proficient in English are able to use English comfortably. This ability is often measured using international quality measures such as the TOEFL, IELTS, or CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages). English is a *lingua franca* in many fields such as education, business, technology, and diplomacy. Crystal (2003) states that more than one billion people worldwide employ English as a second or foreign language. In the academic world, a lot of scientific journals, reference books, and learning materials are available in English, making this language skill crucial for students (Graddol, 2006).

Factors Influencing English Proficiency

Several factors that influence a person's level of English proficiency include motivation which consists of both instrumental motivation for example to obtain a job and integrative motivation such as to engage with native speakers (Gardner, 1985), learning environment that is related with Access to materials, speaking practice, and exposure to everyday English (Ellis, 1994), and educational background which is related with students from schools with an English-based curriculum tend to have better proficiency (Nation, 2010), and lastly, technological support which is about relevant with The use of digital media, language learning apps, and social media also accelerates the learning process (Godwin-Jones, 2011).

English Proficiency in Indonesia's Education

In Indonesia, English language acquisition remains a challenge, primarily due to limited teaching methods and an environment that does not support active English use (Marcellino, 2008). A study by Hamied (2012) showed that despite years of English learning in school,

many students still struggle with oral communication and understanding English texts. Septiani et al. (2021) notes that it is challenging for students in Indonesia to use English in everday life due to several factors which include motivation and teachers' competence. They state that teachers' competence play crucial role in improve students' motivation in learning English. There were also noticeable disparities on students English proficiency across region in Indonesia due to different background, genders, and majors (Ras, 2017).

English Proficiency Assessment

English proficiency assessment can be conducted formally through tests such as the TOEFL, IELTS, and others. One of the guidelines that is commonly used CEFR is a standard used internationally to describe and categorize someone's level of English. Based on Renandya et al. (2018) as a language proficiency framework, CEFR has been used to describe English learners not only in Europe, but also globally, such as in Indonesia and Malaysia. Since its publication in 2001, the CEFR has become one of the most influential frameworks in language teaching worldwide. Invented by the Council of Europe, it has goal to create standardization for curriculum design of English lesson, teaching, learning, and assessment across educational systems. CEFR categorizes speakers into three classifications which are Basic user, Independent user, and Proficient user. CEFR focuses on real-life communication and can be easily assessed. Moreover, Council of Europe (2001) states that standards defined by CEFR can be adapted to local context, different needs, and curricula.

Table 1. CEFR Level Descriptor.

A1	Basic user
A2	
B1	Independent user
B2	
C1	Proficient user
C2	

Source: Council of Europe

CEFR's theoretical foundation is rooted in communicative language teaching. It is an extensive framework that has significantly influenced the way languages are taught, learned, and evaluated. With its foundation in communicative competence and an action-oriented perspective, it offers a flexible and transparent means of defining language proficiency. Despite certain limitations, the CEFR remains a key reference in contemporary language education and assessment because of its clarity, adaptability, and worldwide applicability.

3. **RESEARCH METHOD**

The research was done at the Politeknik Pertanian Negeri Payakumbuh. The research period was May–October 2025. This research applied a quantitative method with a quasi-experimental approach. Quantitative research is a scientific approach used to study a specific population or sample, with the aim of testing hypotheses and generating generalizations based on numerical data. This research is objective, systematic, and uses valid and reliable measurement instruments (Sugiyono, 2017). A quasi-experiment (quasi-experiment) is a research design that is similar with a true experiment but does not use full randomization in assigning subjects to the experimental and control groups. According to Cook (1979), a quasi-experimental design is used when the researcher does not have full control over the allocation of subjects to the experimental or control group, but still administers a treatment and measures the effects of that treatment.

The participants were final-semester students taking TOEFL classes (n = 26) and they were chosen through purposive sampling. The research instruments utilized in this study are the TOEFL pre-test and post-test. The TOEFL course that was conducted in this study was TOEFL ITP. The course was administered for 16 meetings or one semester. Data analysis in this study used a paired sample t-test to examine differences between pre-test and post-test scores, as well as descriptive analysis on the result in relation with CEFR level.

4. **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The Result of TOEFL Course on Students' TOEFL Proficiency

The TOEFL course for the final year students was conducted for 16 meetings. A pre-test was administered in the first meeting to determine the English level of the students before the lesson. After that, listening comprehension, structure and written expression and reading comprehension were taught for 14 meetings. The final meeting was assigned for the post-test TOEFL. To examine the statistical effect of implementing TOEFL learning, an analysis was done using SPSS. The given table below presents the interpreration of the TOEFL pre-test and post-test results administered to 8th-semester students of the Computer Engineering Technology Study Program at Politeknik Pertanian Negeri Payakumbuh.

Table 1. Results of the Paired Sample t-test.

Paired Samples Statistics

Variabel	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Over_Pre	380.38	26	40.927	8.027
Over_Post	416.08	26	57.139	11.206

Paired Samples Correlations

Pair	N	Correlation	Sig. (p-value)
Over_Pre & Over_Post	26	0.497	0.010

It is found that there was a growth in the average TOEFL test score after the TOEFL learning program was implemented. The mean score increased from 380.38 to 416.08 after the treatment, indicating an average improvement of 35.7 points. Furthermore, the table above also shows that the significance value of the paired t-test for the pre-test and post-test was 0.010. This indicates that there was a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores. The significance value of 0.010 is smaller than the threshold of 0.05, and in that case, there is statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores. The distinction in each student's pre-test and post-test scores can be seen in the following diagram.
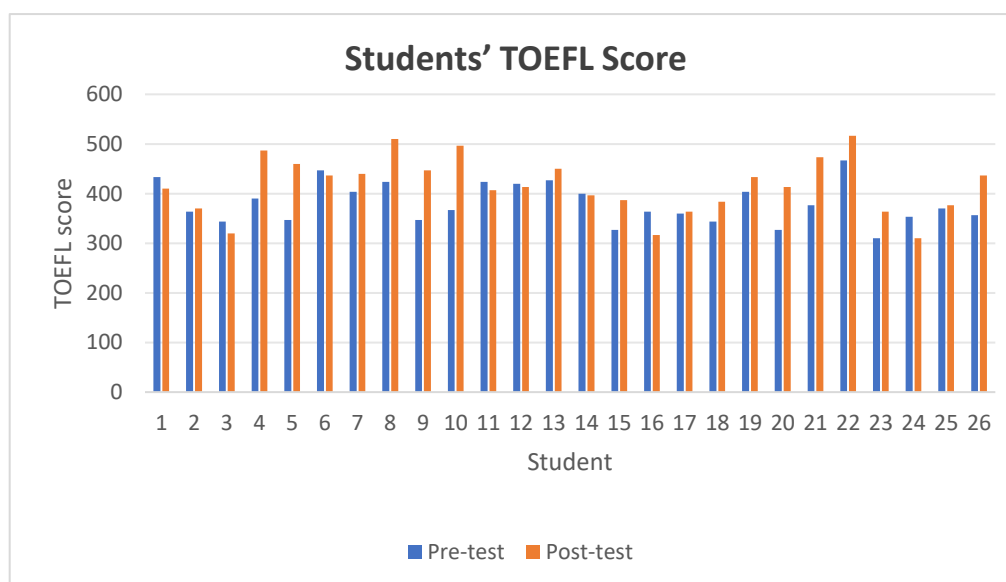

Figure 1. Comparison of TOEFL Pre-test and Post-test Scores.

From the given graph above, it is clearly seen that most students experienced an increase in their TOEFL scores after attending the TOEFL class for one semester. Out of 26 students, 18 showed an improvement in their scores. Therefore, it can be concluded that 69%

of the students experienced an increase in their TOEFL scores. However, the remaining 31% showed a decrease in their scores. This percentage is relatively high and indicates that, instead of showing improvement, these 8 students (31%) actually experienced a decline in their TOEFL scores after taking the TOEFL class for one semester.

It can be inferred that TOEFL course has elevated PPNP students' English proficiency. The first finding indicates that nearly 70% of the students experienced a rise in their TOEFL score after attending TOEFL class for one semester. This result is in accordance with Dalimunte et al. (2025) in their study which indicate that TOEFL preparation program has significantly affected the English proficiency level of university students in Indonesia. Similarly, (Soetjipta, 2023) also conducted similar study which then found that TOEFL course was effective to help students achieve score above 500. The score increases can be interpreted as improvements in English competence, since TOEFL is a recognized measure of such proficiency. The outcome of this study aligns with prior evidence which shows that TOEFL preparation programs consistently enhance learners' performance on standardized proficiency measures. Dalimunte et al. (2025), for example, reported that students enrolled in a structured TOEFL program demonstrated significant gains across listening, structure, and reading, suggesting that targeted instruction not only familiarizes learners with test formats but also reinforces core language competencies. Similarly, Aprilliandari & Sugiharto (2023) concluded that their TOEFL training effectively enhance students' overall proficiency level. As also highlighted by Rosyidi et al. (2024), the training program also shows that structured and continuous guidance can have a positive impact on improving students' overall English proficiency.

However, despite the improvement on most students, based on the findings, around 30% of the students did not experience a growth in their TOEFL score. Various level of students' English competence, time limitation, poor vocabulary and grammar control, students' social status and age and also low motivation are the causes of lack of improvement in TOEFL (Akmal et al., 2020; Mahmud, 2014). Based on Septiani et al. (2021), students' motivation to study English has a positive significant correlation with their proficiency level.

The Highest Skill Score Improvement

This part analyzes the improvement of each skill of TOEFL for all students during both pretest and post-test.

Table 2. Paired Sample Statistics Each Skill.

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	List_Pre	38.46	26	5.054	.991
	List_Post	42.73	26	7.074	1.387
Pair 2	Stru_Pre	34.62	26	4.355	.854
	Stru_Post	37.35	26	5.980	1.173
Pair 3	Read_Pre	41.04	26	7.175	1.407
	Read_Post	44.73	26	7.943	1.558

Table 3. Paired Sample Statistics Each Skill.

	Paired Differences							
				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1 List_Pre - List_Post	-4.269	5.773	1.132	-6.601	-1.938	-3.771	25	.001
Pair 2 Stru_Pre - Stru_Post	-2.731	7.074	1.387	-5.588	.127	-1.968	25	.060
Pair 3 Read_Pre - Read_Post	-3.692	8.308	1.629	-7.048	-.337	-2.266	25	.032

Based on the table above, the average scores for Listening, Structure and Written Expression, and Reading Comprehension increased overall after the implementation of the TOEFL class. To determine which skill showed the most significant improvement, a statistical significance test was given. It is inferred that there is statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores of each skill. The results indicate that there is statistically significant difference in both Listening and Reading skills, while there is no statistically significant difference in structure skill as its significance value exceeded 0.05. Listening, with a significance value of 0.01, demonstrated the most substantial improvement, being far below the 0.05 threshold. Reading also showed significant improvement, with a significance value of 0.032, which is below 0.05 but not as pronounced as Listening.

Based on the finding, listening comprehension had the highest increase among Structure and Written Expression and also Reading Comprehension. In line with this finding, research by Maharani & Putro (2021) state that students in their study felt that they experienced more improvement in listening and reading skills. According to Sulistiyaningsih & Binabar (2022) listening skill is a very important skill for adult learners because it is required to help them engage in communication at workplace, study, and also community. It can be interpreted that the proficiency gains observed among PPNP students are attributable to the structured, skill-focused nature of the TOEFL course. In other words, the course does not simply teach test-taking strategies but meaningfully contributes to the development of underlying linguistic abilities required for successful TOEFL performance.

These results suggest that well-designed TOEFL programs not only improve general English proficiency but can target and strengthen specific language skills, with listening comprehension often benefiting the most—a critical advantage for academic and real-world communication. Fadhilah et al. (2022) found out that there was a significant difference between the result of pretest and post-test of their students TOEFL score after they used transcription technique for teaching listening skill in TOEFL. In other words, the listening comprehension skill of their students improved significantly.

Analysis of Students' TOEFL Scores with CEFR Levels

According to CEFR level, students who get the score of 627 or above is categorized into C1 level and the lowest level is A2 with the score of 337 or above. Those who get under 337 fall into under categorization. Following one semester of TOEFL instruction, it was observed that students, on average, demonstrated an improvement in their TOEFL scores.

Table 4. Conversion of TOEFL scores based on CEFR.

CEFR	TOEFL ITP Score	Listening	Structure and Written Expression	Reading Comprehension
C1	627	64	64	63
B2	543	54	53	56
B1	460	47	43	48
A2	337	38	32	31

Source: www.ets.org

The following diagrams illustrate the proportion of students' score on both pre-test and post-test.

Pre-test CEFR Level Conversion

■ A1　■ A2　■ B1

3

21

Post-test CEFR Level Conversion
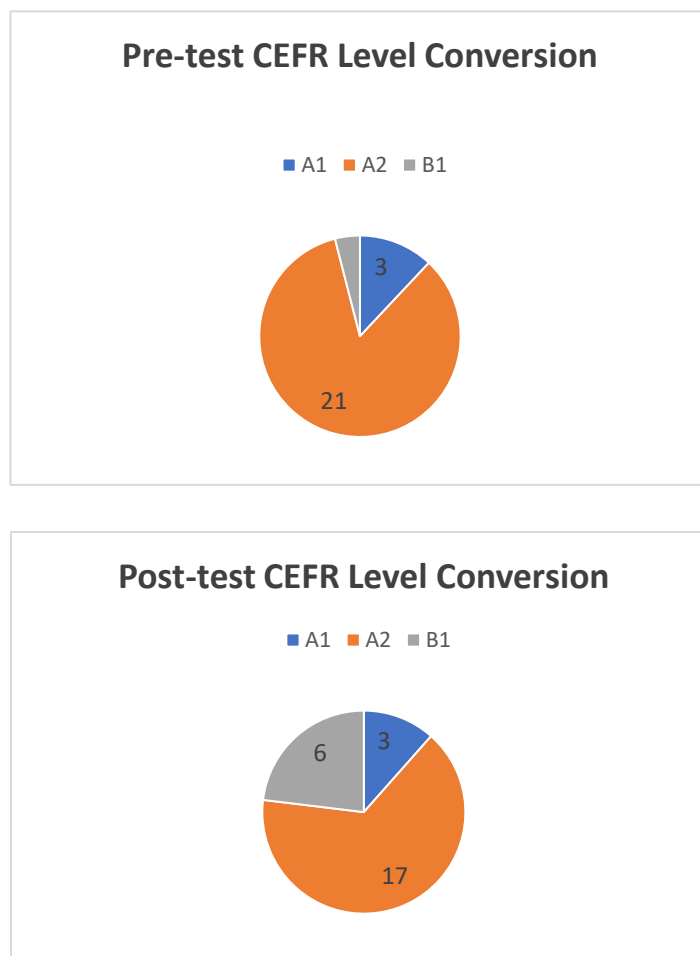
■ A1　■ A2　■ B1

6　3

17

Figure 2. Pre-test and Post test conversion to CEFR.

It is clearly seen that the result of pre-test indicate that most participants were at the A2 level, with very few were below categorization and B1. After the TOEFL course administered, as it is seen from post-test result, A2-level learners decreased, while B1-level learners increased, suggesting an overall improvement in CEFR levels. The number of students who were below categorization remained unchanged and several students progressed from A2 to B1.

These results indicate a general upward trend in language proficiency among the students over the course of the semester. When these scores were mapped onto the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages), the lowest scores were classified at level A2, while the highest reached level B1. However, three students fell below categorization, the majority—seventeen students—were at level A2, and six students achieved level B1. Therefore, the finding clearly demonstrates the positive impact of the training in enhancing English proficiency from elementary (A2) to intermediate (B1) levels. Council of Europe (2001) states that CEFR provides clear descriptors for proficiency levels. A2

(Elementary level) represents the ability to understand and employ basic expressions, handle simple transactions, and communicate in predictable situations while B1 (Intermediate level) reflects the ability to maintain interaction, understand the language, produce connected discourse, and express opinions on familiar topics. In the CEFR, the shift from A2 to B1 represents a developmental transition from basic communicative ability to more autonomous, functional use of English in familiar academic and social contexts. Movement from A2 to B1 is supported by training because learners expand their vocabulary range, develop coherent discourse, improve comprehension and increase communicative competence (Council of Europe, 2001).

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The findings of this study indicate that the TOEFL course significantly improved PPNP students' English proficiency. After one semester of instruction, nearly 70% of students showed increased TOEFL scores, reflecting measurable gains in their overall language skills. Listening comprehension showed the highest improvement, highlighting the program's effectiveness in targeting specific language skills crucial for academic and real-world communication.

Furthermore, the course contributed to raising students' proficiency from the elementary (A2) to the intermediate (B1) level based on the CEFR framework, confirming the program's substantial impact on overall English development. However, in this study, there were still several students who did not experience any improvement in their TOEFL scores. Further study can be conducted to explore the factor influencing this issue. In addition, the students perception on the TOEFL course can also be explored for future study.

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