

ENGLISH PROFICIENCY OF LECTURERS AT A PRIVATE UNIVERSITY IN INDONESIA: TOEFL AND CEFR STANDARDS

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Abstract

In the globalization era, lecturers at a private university in Semarang must possess good English proficiency. Proficiency in English can be determined by the score achieved in TOEFL (Test of English as Foreign Language), which is classified based on the standard of CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Language). This study aims to identify the English proficiency of lecturers at a private university in Semarang and to determine the appropriate training model to enhance their English proficiency. The data for this article was collected through testing, which was conducted once for the lecturers at a private university in Semarang. The scores were then analyzed using descriptive quantitative methods. The analysis revealed that the level of proficiency in English for lecturers in undergraduate and diploma Nursing, undergraduate Midwifery, undergraduate Pharmacy and undergraduate Physiotherapy is A2 Elementary. Based on the analysis, the suitable training model for lecturers at a private university in Semarang includes listening skills, structure skills, and reading comprehension skills at the Elementary level.

Keywords: *English Proficiency, Lecturers, TOEFL, CEFR*

INTRODUCTION

It has been noted that one of the key factors that determine the quality of a university is the English language proficiency of its lecturers. If lecturers are proficient in English, it can greatly enhance their teaching abilities (Sosas, 2021). Language learners must master four key skills, which include speaking, listening, reading, and writing. The TOEFL test is considered one of the most appropriate ways to assess an individual's proficiency in all of these areas (Putri & Syarif, 2021).

TOEFL is an acronym for Test of English as a Foreign Language and it assesses an individual's English language proficiency in listening ability, understanding of grammar, and reading

comprehension (Fitria, 2021). As an academic, lecturers require TOEFL scores for various purposes, including lecturer certification, which mandates a minimum score requirement on the TOEFL certificate. Moreover, TOEFL scores that meet the requirements can be used to pursue higher studies for a lecturer. In general, lecturers who achieve a good TOEFL score demonstrate good English proficiency, which can help them publish their research or scientific work using English at an international level. Therefore, the English proficiency of a lecturer is crucial to their duties and responsibilities.

Health lecturers can improve their competitiveness by mastering the latest scientific developments in international journals written in English (Darma & Widiastuty, 2023). They can also create better learning materials based on research and participate in international seminars as presenters or speakers. Improving their English language skills to the maximum is essential to make the most of these opportunities.

It has been observed by researchers that lecturers at a private university in Semarang, Indonesia, tend to avoid using spoken English both in theory and practice during lectures. Instead of explaining the material in English, they prefer to move on to the next discussion in Indonesian. Furthermore, it was noted that the participation of lecturers as speakers in international seminars was very low. When lecturers act as moderators, they still rely on written texts in English, which can hinder the success of international seminar activities. The interactions between lecturers and foreign guests from outside institutions also appear to be stiff, leading to misunderstandings that may need to be repeated multiple times until both parties understand. Additionally, lecturers' participation in international journals is still minimal due to their hesitancy to write articles in English. Most lecturers still rely on Google Translate, resulting in a decrease in the quality of their writing due to language barriers. They are also reluctant to look for writing references from articles in international journals due to their lack of ability to understand English texts. Hence, researchers have conducted research to identify the English language skills of lecturers through the TOEFL test based on the CEFR standard.

It is important to explore the English language proficiency of lecturers at a private university in Semarang, using the CEFR standard as a benchmark. That is because CEFR has been emerging as a reference to assess language competence in the last two decades and the implementation of CEFR in Indonesia is still at infancy despite the potential (Subekti et al., 2023). To achieve this goal, the lecturers at a private university were given an offline TOEFL test, which was conducted simultaneously for all permanent lecturers who teach at a private university in Semarang. Based on the results, an appropriate training model can be developed to improve their English proficiency, which will positively impact the quality of the institution.

Listening Comprehension

The importance of listening cannot be overstated. It involves a range of activities such as understanding, reasoning, remembering, and responding. In listening activities, individuals are required to differentiate between word sounds, recognize words, identify grammatical groups of words, identify parts or whole utterances that function as an entire unit to derive meaning, use background knowledge and context to predict and confirm meaning, and remember important words and ideas conveyed

Listening is a vital skill that requires giving oral symbols your full attention, understanding,

appreciation, and interpretation. The goal is to obtain information, capture the content or message, and understand the meaning of the communication that the speaker has conveyed through speech or spoken language (Rahma et al., 2022). It is important to actively listen in order to fully comprehend what the speaker is saying and respond appropriately.

At a private university in Semarang, lecturers are expected to have a good grasp of listening skills in each sub-section of listening comprehension questions. Many lecturers find it challenging to develop their listening skills due to various difficulties and obstacles. One of the main problems is the requirement for concentration and focus, as these are crucial for retaining the information heard during the listening activity (Utomo et al., 2019). However, several external factors can significantly affect lecturers' ability to concentrate and focus, such as distractions from others who are not paying attention and unfavourable conditions in the classroom that make it difficult to understand the exposition texts.

Structure and Written Comprehension

Grammar is a set of rules that enables a person to construct sentences and convey meaning in a language (Sioco & De Vera, 2018). In English, grammar proficiency involves understanding nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, determiners, phrases, clauses, sentences, and tenses (Monny & Manurung, 2020). The TOEFL test's structure and written expression section assesses grammar mastery in two sub-sections: structure (sentence structure) and written expression (written English expression).

To excel in the structure sub-section, it is important to understand that the questions are incomplete sentences which need to be filled with parts following proper grammar. The sub-section consists of multiple-choice questions with four answer options.

In the written expression section, the correct answer is the part that does not match the grammar in a sentence for each number. To get the correct answer, one's grammatical error analysis skills will be tested. Error analysis involves identifying, classifying, and explaining errors made by someone in writing or speaking (Kharmilah & Narius, 2019; Subekti, 2017, 2018). The aim of error analysis is to determine the level of understanding of language structures, language learning models, and the difficulties encountered while learning a language. For lecturers at a private university in Semarang, mastering these parts is crucial to performing well in the structure and written comprehension questions.

Reading Comprehension

Reading is a crucial language skill that plays an essential role in our daily lives. It involves recognizing and comprehending the meaning contained in written language, with the aim of obtaining information or messages that the author intends to convey (Oclarit & Casinillo, 2021). Reading is indeed a process that we use to obtain messages conveyed through words or written language (Fahrozy, 2023). To fully understand the meaning of a text, it is important to consider the context in which it was written (Nasucha, 2018). This context may include personal experiences, socio-cultural backgrounds, and scientific knowledge. In fact, socio-cultural and scientific contexts are often the most common ones encountered when reading TOEFL texts.

When it comes to TOEFL reading comprehension questions, the most common type of reading is silent reading. The focus of TOEFL reading comprehension questions is on comprehension,

critical reading, speed reading, and language analysis. Comprehension reading is used to understand the content of the reading in detail, while speed reading is used to identify the main idea of the reading in the shortest possible time (Smith et al., 2021). Language analysis reading is used to examine the language rules of the reading, such as capitalization, punctuation, affixation, homonyms, idioms, sentence patterns, proverbs, word derivation, and language styles (Haq, 2019).

Common European Framework of Reference for Language (CEFR)

CEFR, which stands for the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, is a widely accepted standard used to describe language proficiency (Kamil, 2023, Subekti et al., 2023). The CEFR framework is used across the globe to ascertain an individual's language skills. One of the most common ways to measure English proficiency levels based on the CEFR standard is through TOEFL scores. The following table provides an overview of the different English proficiency levels, as classified by the CEFR standard, based on TOEFL scores. The CEFR, along with other frameworks such as the ACTFL, CLB, and ILR, is a tool that can help to gauge language proficiency.

Table 1. English Proficiency Level Based on TOEFL with CEFR Standards

Level	Minimum Score	Listening Comprehension	Structure and Written Expression	Reading Comprehension
C1 - Advanced	627	64	64	63
B2 - Upper-Intermediate	543	54	53	56
B1 - Intermediate	460	47	43	48
A2 - Elementary	337	38	32	31

Although it was designed specifically for European languages, the CEFR is now being used as a global standard for language abilities (Arifudin & Maryo, 2021). It is not associated with any particular language test, but many standardized language tests do offer CEFR-level equivalents. It is interesting to note that the CEFR is not limited to a particular test but rather a set of can-do statements that describe the various functions that can be performed in a foreign language at different levels of proficiency.

METHODS

To gather the necessary data, the researcher used a testing technique. Specifically, a TOEFL test was designed as an instrument to collect the data. Furthermore, the collected data was analyzed using the quantitative descriptive method. The quantitative method involves research based on the philosophy of positivism to examine specific populations or samples, utilizing random sampling with data collection using instruments and statistical data analysis (Afandi & Nashiroh, 2020). Descriptive research is research that attempts to solve existing problems based on data by presenting, analyzing, and interpreting it. The quantitative descriptive research method uses quantitative descriptive analysis techniques to convert the research data into a description of numbers that are easy to understand (Jayusman et al., 2020).

The data collected from TOEFL test scores were analyzed and grouped based on the study programs offered at a private university in Semarang. To classify the English proficiency level

of lecturers, the CEFR standard was used, and the average score was taken into account. The classification data was presented in a table format to make the average TOEFL score achievement and overall English proficiency level of lecturers in each study program easily visible. Moreover, the level of English proficiency based on TOEFL scores in listening, structure, and reading comprehension was also displayed in tabular form for each study program and as a whole. The objective of describing this data is to identify the English proficiency level of lecturers at a private university in Semarang and determine an appropriate training model to improve their English language skills.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The TOEFL is a comprehensive test that evaluates an individual's proficiency in listening comprehension, grammar (structure and written expression), and reading comprehension (Badu, 2020). The test comprises a specific number of questions in each category, and there is a designated time to complete each section. The table below displays the number of questions in each category and the time allotted to complete them.

Table 2. Structure of Questions and Duration of TOEFL

Skill	Sub-Part	Number	Duration (minutes)
Listening Comprehension	Part A	30	35
	Part B	8	
	Part C	12	
Structure & Written Comprehension	Structure	15	25
	Written Expression	25	
Reading Comprehension	Reading	50	55
Total		140	115

All questions in each section of the test are in the form of multiple choice with options ranging from A to D. The answering process involves the lecturers directly and the use of a computer application in the CBT lab at a private university in Semarang. The answers are then automatically saved in the application for processing and analysis. It is important to note that the TOEFL scores are not displayed immediately after the test is completed. Instead, they are processed and analyzed first before being made available to the test-takers.

The lecturers who took the TOEFL test at a private university in Semarang came from different study programs within the institution. Specifically, there were 19 participants from the S1 Nursing study program, 7 from the S1 Midwifery program, 8 from the S1 Pharmacy program, 4 from the S1 Physiotherapy program, and 7 from the D3 Nursing program. The implementation of the TOEFL test went smoothly without any technical problems, ensuring an orderly process for all the participants.

At a private university in Semarang, Indonesia, the average TOEFL score of lecturers from different study programs is displayed in Table 3.

Table 3. The Average TOEFL Score of the Lecturers

Study Program	Average Score	CEFR	Level
S1 Nursing	418	A2	Elementary
S1 Midwifery	394	A2	Elementary
S1 Pharmacy	439	A2	Elementary
S1 Physiotherapy	374	A2	Elementary
D3 Nursing	369	A2	Elementary

Based on the data in Table 3, it was found that lecturers from the S1 Pharmacy study program had the highest average TOEFL score, while those from the D3 Nursing study program had the lowest average TOEFL score. The difference in the average TOEFL score between each study program was close. The overall average TOEFL score for each study program was at the A2 Elementary level. This suggests that lecturers in all study programs at a private university in Semarang have a basic understanding of English. They can understand speech on simple topics and in familiar situations. However, their knowledge of grammar is limited to simple sentences consisting of subject, predicate, and object. When it comes to understanding reading texts, all lecturers at a private university in Semarang can comprehend the explicit meaning of the texts and identify simple pronouns. Therefore, their English proficiency is at a basic level.

The scores achieved by all lecturers at a private university in Semarang in each section of the TOEFL test were analyzed by the author. The average score achievement in the Listening comprehension section attained by all lecturers from different study programs at a private university in Semarang is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. The Average TOEFL Score of the Lecturers

Study Program	Average Score	CEFR	Level
S1 Nursing	41	A2	Elementary
S1 Midwifery	38	A2	Elementary
S1 Pharmacy	44	A2	Elementary
S1 Physiotherapy	38	A2	Elementary
D3 Nursing	41	A2	Elementary

Based on the information provided in Table 4, it can be inferred that the listening skills of lecturers from various study programs at a private university in Semarang are at the A2 Elementary level. This indicates that all lecturers from different study programs at a private university in Semarang can comprehend the main topic of a conversation with ease. However, they have a limited vocabulary and may need repetition of the spoken words to understand the context. It was also found that the lecturers need help with the implicit context of speech. Nevertheless, they have the ability to distinguish personal pronouns used in speech to understand the speaker's position.

Then, the result of the average score achievement in the Structure & Written Comprehension section attained by all lecturers from different study programs at a private university in Semarang is analyzed. The table presents the data clearly and indicates the overall performance of the lecturers in this section.

Table 5. The Average TOEFL Score of the Lecturers in Structure and Written Comprehension

Study Program	Average Score	CEFR	Level
S1 Nursing	39	A2	Elementary
S1 Midwifery	39	A2	Elementary
S1 Pharmacy	43	B1	Intermediate
S1 Physiotherapy	39	A2	Elementary
D3 Nursing	38	A2	Elementary

It appears that based on the data presented in Table 5, lecturers in the S1 Pharmacy program at a private university in Semarang have better grammar skills compared to their counterparts in other study programs. The lecturers in the S1 Pharmacy program have a B1 Intermediate level of grammatical ability, which means they have a good grasp of passive sentences and can identify verbs that require objects. Additionally, they have a good understanding of compound sentences with various connectors like before, if, and others. They can also quickly determine the subject's position and predicate in a sentence. Meanwhile, lecturers in the S1 Nursing, S1 Midwifery, S1 Physiotherapy, and D3 Nursing programs show a simpler understanding of grammar at the A2 Elementary level. At this level, they can recognize the form of sentences with simple tenses, understand the difference between singular and plural objects, and use the form of comparison more than simply in a sentence.

All lecturers from various study programs at a private university in Semarang achieved different scores in the Reading Comprehension section. The table below shows their average score achievement.

Table 6. The Average TOEFL Score of the Lecturers in Reading Comprehension

Study Program	Average Score	CEFR	Level
S1 Nursing	45	A2	Elementary
S1 Midwifery	40	A2	Elementary
S1 Pharmacy	45	A2	Elementary
S1 Physiotherapy	38	A2	Elementary
D3 Nursing	34	A2	Elementary

Based on the information presented in Table 6, it appears that lecturers in S1 Nursing and S1 Pharmacy programs performed the best in the Reading Comprehension section, with the highest average score. On the other hand, lecturers in the D3 Nursing program obtained the lowest average score in the same section. Overall, it seems that the reading comprehension ability of lecturers at a private university in Semarang is at the A2 Elementary level. This means that they can grasp the main idea of a reading text by focusing on keywords that are frequently used throughout the text. Additionally, they can locate the information they need by using the provided aids. Furthermore, lecturers at a private university in Semarang are capable of understanding substitute words that refer to people or objects mentioned in the reading text.

At a private university in Semarang, the TOEFL scores of every lecturer from several study

programs are presented in the Table 7.

Table 7. Result of the TOEFL Test of the Lecturers

Study Program	TOEFL Score	CEFR	Level
S1 Nursing 1	487	B1	Intermediate
S1 Nursing 2	460	B1	Intermediate
S1 Nursing 3	457	A2	Elementary
S1 Nursing 4	457	A2	Elementary
S1 Nursing 5	457	A2	Elementary
S1 Nursing 6	453	A2	Elementary
S1 Nursing 7	450	A2	Elementary
S1 Nursing 8	450	A2	Elementary
S1 Nursing 9	450	A2	Elementary
S1 Nursing 10	417	A2	Elementary
S1 Nursing 11	410	A2	Elementary
S1 Nursing 12	403	A2	Elementary
S1 Nursing 13	397	A2	Elementary
S1 Nursing 14	387	A2	Elementary
S1 Nursing 15	377	A2	Elementary
S1 Nursing 16	370	A2	Elementary
S1 Nursing 17	363	A2	Elementary
S1 Nursing 18	353	A2	Elementary
S1 Nursing 19	343	A2	Elementary
S1 Midwifery 1	457	A2	Elementary
S1 Midwifery 2	453	A2	Elementary
S1 Midwifery 3	450	A2	Elementary
S1 Midwifery 4	410	A2	Elementary
S1 Midwifery 5	347	A2	Elementary
S1 Midwifery 6	330	A2	Elementary
S1 Midwifery 7	310	A2	Elementary
D3 Nursing 1	453	A2	Elementary
D3 Nursing 2	390	A2	Elementary
Study Program	TOEFL Score	CEFR	Level
D3 Nursing 3	367	A2	Elementary
D3 Nursing 4	360	A2	Elementary
D3 Nursing 5	350	A2	Elementary
D3 Nursing 6	347	A2	Elementary
D3 Nursing 7	320	A2	Elementary
S1 Pharmacy 1	503	B1	Intermediate
S1 Pharmacy 2	373	A2	Elementary
S1 Pharmacy 3	453	A2	Elementary
S1 Pharmacy 4	457	A2	Elementary
S1 Pharmacy 5	413	A2	Elementary
S1 Pharmacy 6	450	A2	Elementary

S1 Pharmacy 7	407	A2	Elementary
S1 Pharmacy 8	453	A2	Elementary
S1 Physiotherapy 1	360	A2	Elementary
S1 Physiotherapy 2	397	A2	Elementary
S1 Physiotherapy 3	383	A2	Elementary
S1 Physiotherapy 4	357	A2	Elementary

According to Table 7 data, it seems that three lecturers, two from S1 Nursing and one from S1 Pharmacy, achieved TOEFL scores at the B1 Intermediate level. Additionally, these three lecturers exhibited better English understanding skills than other lecturers from different study programs who scored at the A2 Elementary level. This highlights a notable gap in the English proficiency level of most lecturers at a private university in Semarang.

Based on TOEFL scores, the lecturers at a private university in Semarang are categorized according to their English proficiency levels in accordance with the CEFR standard. The table below shows the percentage distribution of these levels.

Table 8. Percentage of English Proficiency Level Based on CEFR

CEFR	Level	Number of Lecturers	Percentage
B1	Intermediate	3	6,6 %
A2	Elementary	42	93,4 %

There is a significant discrepancy between the percentage of lecturers who have English proficiency levels at the B1 Intermediate level, which is only 6.6%, and those who have English proficiency levels at the A2 Elementary level, which is 93.4%, according to the data presented in Table 8.

It appears that the lecturers at a private university in Semarang need assistance in understanding verbal utterances in English, as their listening skills are low. The reason for this is their limited use of spoken English both inside and outside the classroom. To improve their skills, it is recommended that lecturers maximize their use of English in daily interactions and respond to spoken English utterances more frequently. Additionally, continuous training can be provided to help build the habit of speaking English orally, especially during international seminars held annually at a private university in Semarang. Through intensive training, it is expected that the lecturers will improve their English listening skills.

It seems that the grammar skills of the lecturers at a private university in Semarang are at a basic level. The lecturers lack confidence in writing using good and proper grammar in English, which is due to their limited understanding of the structure and grammar in English. As a result, they feel hesitant to participate in publishing their articles in international journals. Intensive training can help the lecturers build their understanding of English structures from the basic level onwards, which is necessary for their professional growth.

It seems that lecturers at a private university in Semarang are facing a challenge when it comes to reading texts in English. This can hinder their ability to improve their competencies by read-

ing textbooks and articles in international journals, which are usually in English. The lack of understanding of English grammar and structure also affects their comprehension of the text as a whole. To overcome this hurdle, the lecturers at a private university in Semarang need to work on increasing their vocabulary both academically and non-academically. They could start by incorporating medical terms into their teaching and practice during lectures as a way to build their awareness and further improve their reading skills.

As per the TOEFL results obtained by lecturers at a private university in Semarang, it has been observed that their English language skills are below average. This is a matter of concern as good English language skills are crucial for the quality of lecturers at a private university in Semarang. With good English language skills, lecturers can improve their writing abilities and produce articles in English to be published in international journals. Additionally, good oral English skills can boost the confidence of lecturers to participate as speakers or presenters in international seminars, which can have a positive impact on advancing the institution as a whole. Therefore, it is recommended that the lecturers undergo training to improve their listening, grammar, and text-reading skills to enhance their scores in the next TOEFL test and significantly improve their English language skills.

CONCLUSION

Based on the TOEFL scores achieved, it has been found that the English proficiency level of lecturers at a private university in Semarang is still at the primary level (A2 Elementary) according to the CEFR standard. The lecturers' skills in Listening Comprehension, Structure and Written Comprehension, and Reading Comprehension are also at the primary level. Out of the 45 lecturers who took the TOEFL test, only three scored better at the B1 Intermediate level, while the rest scored at the primary level, A2 Elementary. As a result, the training given to lecturers at a private university in Semarang must be simple and easy to understand to strengthen their English language skills at the primary level. The existing English proficiency training should be held regularly to provide opportunities for the lecturers to practice their English skills continuously. The lecturers must focus on strengthening their basic listening skills, grammar skills, and the ability to understand reading texts. The English proficiency training should also provide a lot of practice questions with a manageable level of difficulty to build the foundation of English proficiency (Meltareza et al., 2022).

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