



THE INSTRUMENT TO MEASURE ENGLISH PROFICIENCY OF THE PROSPECTIVE EMPLOYEES: BETWEEN TOEFL AND TOEIC

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Abstract

Recently the university students are required by their institutions to have the TOEFL score in the first year or in the last year of their study before graduation. Some other higher institutions require their students to submit TOEIC, not TOEFL, before graduation. Companies, in the recruitment process, require the applicants to submit TOEFL score to show their level of English proficiency. The first question is which one is more appropriate for job applicants in the company: TOEFL or TOEIC. Another question for university students before graduation is whether to have TOEFL in the first year or in the last year before graduation. This article aims at answering the two questions raised. The first part will give an overview of various versions of TOEFL and TOEIC and the second part proposes the appropriate English proficiency test for the recruitment process for new employees and for the university graduates, that is, TOEIC for the company and TOEFL for universities and colleges.

Keywords: TOEFL, TOEIC, proficiency test, testing.

Introduction

There is an interesting phenomenon in the higher institutions and business world lately in relation to the use of TOEFL as a benchmark for assessing a person's competence level in English. Some higher institutions in Surabaya, both public and private, requires their students to have a minimum TOEFL score of 450 before graduation. On the other hand, some other colleges and universities require their students to have a TOEFL score of 450 at least at the beginning of their study or first semester. There are also universities requesting TOEIC score from the students at the end of their study - not a TOEFL score. The first question is which one is true, whether to require students to have a TOEFL score in the first year or at the end of their study. The second question is which one is more appropriate, the TOEFL score or the TOEIC score at the end of the study period.

In the world of business, many companies require TOEFL scores from prospective employees as one of the requirements in the recruitment process as seen in advertisements

about job vacancy in newspapers and magazines. The question is which TOEFL is requested since there are three versions of TOEFL in circulation nowadays. Then, another question is whether a high Paper-Based TOEFL (PBT) score will guarantee a person to communicate well, both in writing and speaking. This is questionable because each version of TOEFL has a different purpose. In contrast, there are multinational companies asking for TOEIC scores, not TOEFL score. Which is more appropriate for the world of business, TOEFL or TOEIC score?

This article will give a brief description of the TOEFL and TOEIC versions currently used both officially and unofficially or locally and issues that arise related to corporate policies and higher institution policies on TOEFL and TOEIC scores. The first section provides an explanation on the terms of evaluation, measurement and tests in education. The second section focuses on TOEFL and TOEIC versions as a proficiency test. Finally, the last part proposes a choice between TOEFL and TOEIC for employee selection in the world of business.

The Concept of Evaluation, Measurement, Testing and Assessment

In education, the term evaluation, measurement, test and assessment have different sense although in practice, these four terms are often used interchangeably with more or less the same meaning. In the government regulation No. 19/2005 on national education standards, it is explicitly stated that evaluation is the process of collecting and managing information to measure learners' learning outcomes. A similar understanding is given by Tuckman (1975) and Burhan Nurgiyantoro (1988) who define evaluation as a process designed to measure whether an objective of an activity has been achieved or not. Meanwhile, measurement can be defined as a tool for judging. So, to evaluate an activity, we need to measure in order to get the data. Then, testing is a measuring instrument, a tool designed to measure the ability of learners. The term assessment has a more specific meaning than evaluation. Assessment is a process designed to evaluate the learning activities of learners in a shorter period of time, for example, weekly. Therefore, we are familiar with the terms weekly assessment. In short, evaluation refers to all aspects of the program including resources, staff, organization, implementation and efficiency.

TOEFL and TOEIC as Proficiency Test

TOEFL stands for test of English as a foreign language while TOEIC stands for test of English for international communication. Seen from its purpose, TOEFL and TOEIC belong to the proficiency tests in the sense that these are tests designed to measure a person's competence in a language regardless of the training that he or she may have attended in that language. Thus, proficiency tests are not designed on the basis of the content of a subject or a course which the test taker has taken, such as the achievement test which is based on a course having been taken by the test taker. In contrast, the proficiency test focuses on what specifications a test taker should do in a language to be called "proficient". According to Arthur Hughes in *Testing for the Language Teachers* (1989), being a "proficient" means "having the sufficient commands of the language for a particular purpose", i.e. having sufficient language mastery for a university study. Similar to TOEFL and TOEIC test is IELTS (International English Language Testing Services) which is required for those going to Australia or Europe for further study (Sullivan, 2005: 4).

A. Types of TOEFL

There are several types of TOEFL known today: Paper-Based TOEFL (PBT), TOEFL -ITP, Computer-Based TOEFL (CBT) and Internet -Based TOEFL (iBT). Each test has different characteristics, especially in terms of competence to be measured. At present, the one internationally recognized is iBT, while CBT and PBT are officially not offered anymore. However, some language centers at higher institutions and language courses still offer predictive Paper-Based TOEFL only for local or institutional interest. In Surabaya and several other major cities, universities and companies still use this PBT to measure students' English proficiency and these four types of TOEFL would be described as follows.

1) Paper -Based TOEFL(PBT)

Paper-Based TOEFL is the one which has been used for a long time. This test is designed to predict whether the test taker has got sufficient academic skills to be successful in his/her study at the college or university. Therefore, the context is academic. The language components and skills to be tested are listening, structure, and reading in the context of academic or campus life. Writing skill is tested separately and named as Test of Written English (TWE) while speaking skill is also tested under the label Test of Spoken English (TSE). The status of writing and speaking is not mandatory in the sense that test takers are not required to take it depending on the need. All the questions in structure, listening, and reading are designed in the form of multiple choice with four options. This test takes more less two hours. If the test taker takes writing as well, the time is added by 30 minutes. The total score for listening, reading and structure is between 310 - 677. Writing is judged separately by the range of 1 - 6. The linguistic approach used in the design of this test is structural linguistics that emphasizes on linguistic language competence (what you know about the language). This test is a discrete-point test that is each component or language skill is tested separately (Sharpe, 2006)

2) Computer-Based TOEFL (CBT)

In CBT, the language skills and language components tested are listening, reading, structure, and writing. The different from PBT, writing in CBT is compulsory. The score of writing and structure is combined into one. The approach used in designing this test is a structural linguistic approach which emphasizes on the linguistic competence of the language, that is, the knowledge of the language system, such as the mastery of vocabulary and structure and. This test is officially no longer offered but the textbooks are still available in the library. The CBT score ranges from 0 to 300. (Sullivan, 2005:12)

3) TOEFL - ITP

TOEFL Institutional Testing Program or TOEFL-ITP is almost the same as PBT. The difference is that the TOEFL-ITP is granted upon requests of an educational institution or company and is held and facilitated by that institution but with the same standard. The results are also reported to that institution. In Indonesia, the test is organized by IIEF (The Indonesian International Education Foundation) in Jakarta. In contrast to official Paper-based TOEFLs, the TOEFL -ITP items are usually taken from previous tests that have been issued. The purpose of this test is to measure the level of a person's proficiency in English and to predict the success level of the test taker when pursuing studies at college or university. Lately, many institutions utilizing this test are institutions providing scholarship government Institutions and private companies. The TOEFL-ITP score range is equivalent to TOEFL Paper-Based i.e.310-677 (Sullivan, 2005: 4)

4) iBT / NG-TOEFL

Internet-Based TOEFL or Next Generation TOEFL which began to be enforced internationally since 2006 was born through a long journey within 20 years in line with the development of language teaching methods. In 1986, in an international conference entitled "Towards communicative competence testing" organized by ETS as the TOEFLcenter in the US, the TOEFL got a lot of criticism from language teaching experts, especially by Bachman and Douglas. According to Bachman, TOEFL questions were not contextual; it only measured grammatical competence; very little attention was given to the competence of illocutionary or sociolinguistic aspects. According to Douglas, listening in the TOEFL was not natural because it was not a spontaneous spoken discourse, such as hesitation in answering or negotiating in the interaction. ETS finally received inputs on "communicative language testing" and abandoned the tradition of structuralists. In September 2005, iBT-TOEFL was launched and it was introduced in Indonesia in 2006.

The objectives of iBT-TOEFL are to measure the ability of foreign speakers to understand and to use English in the academic context and to predict the student's success in his study when he / she goes to college. The language skills tested are listening, speaking, reading and writing. There is no structure test because the structure is judged from its use in the speaking and writing sections.

Listening consists of lectures and dialogues with non-native speaker pronunciation and almost all questions are related to pragmatics (intended meaning). Speaking consists of two free questions and four integrated questions. Each free question in speaking is answered within 1 minute (think 15 seconds, answer 45 seconds). The components to be measured in speaking include delivery, the use of language (grammar and vocabulary) and the development of the topic (coherence and unity). The score range is 0-4. Speaking for an integrated question consists of two parts. The first part focuses on the synthesis skills of read-listen and speak. The second part focuses on summarizing the listen and speak section. The elements assessed are overall description of the response, delivery, use of language and topic development.

Writing consists of 2 tasks. The first task is an independent writing, that is, an essay written on a given topic with a minimum length of 300 words in 30 minutes. This essay is argumentative. The second task is integrated writing with the order of read, listen and write. The skills tested are summarizing and synthesizing. The synthesis between what is read and what is sounded: its relationship, its similarity, and its difference. The second writing task is 200 words long and done within 20 minutes. Writing score ranges from one to five.

Reading section consists of 3-5 texts with approximately 700 words in length and in academic context. Reading questions include topics, main ideas, facts, references, inferences, cohesion, rhetoric, summarizing and grouping. The time spent for reading is 60 minutes (Sullivan, 2004).

If compared with the previous TOEFL type, iBT TOEFL shows some new features as follows:

- There is a speaking test
- There is a writing test with mandatory status and consists of two tasks, namely essays which are argumentative and descriptive.

- Reading text is longer (compared to reading in TOEFL Paper-Base,) around 700 words, making it closer to the original text in the lecture.
- There is no grammar test but the grammar is judged in speaking and writing.
- Test -takers can make notes during listening
- The test is integrated
- It requires academic skills or so-called support skills, such as listening for note-taking, summarizing, paraphrasing, and synthesizing. Thus, this test can be used to make predictions that high marks will guarantee a student's success in college because he has such academic skills.
- The time required for the test is 4 hours non-stop
- The range of iBT score is 00-120. For an illustration, the score of 80 in iBT is equivalent to approximately Paper Based TOEFL score 550.

B. TOEIC as Proficiency Test

In contrast to the TOEFL which is aimed at academic interests, TOEIC is very different, that is, it is used for the benefit of communication in general, including business communication as reflected in its name: Test of English for International Communication. This test is designed by ETS (English Testing Services) New Jersey, United States to measure the ability to listen to the conversation and understand the text by testing the basic grammar understanding of English. The context is the daily life and business world as reflected in conversation and text reading. This test consists of two parts, namely listening comprehension and reading which includes reading comprehension and grammar. There are speaking and writing tests available but they are tested separately. The one widely used in Indonesia is listening-reading package. This test takes about two hours and the score ranges from 5 - 990.

Table 1. The TOEIC Score Level Can Be Seen in the Following Table

Score Range	Level
10-250	Novice
255-400	Elementary
405-600	Intermediate
605-780	Basic Working Proficiency
785-900	Advanced working proficiency
905-990	General Professional Proficiency

As an illustration, the minimum score required for an employee is 400. This score indicates that a person can communicate (talk and listen) with others about routine tasks, and can read and understand English-related texts.

The comparison of Paper-Based TOEFL (PBT) and iBT and TOEIC scores can be seen in the following table (Betsis, 2014).

Table 2. The Comparison of Paper-Based TOEFL (PBT) and iBT and TOEIC Scores

Paper-Based TOEFL	iBT/ iBT	TOEIC
310-677	0-120	5-990

Which One is More Appropriate for the Company?

Based on the description of the two types of tests above, it can be concluded that for the selection of prospective employees of the company, TOEIC is more suitable, although there are some shortcomings. The first consideration is the context or content aspect. TOEIC is designed to measure the ability to communicate in everyday life. This is reflected in the choice of text to listen and read which is more related to the world of business, such as schedules, advertising, meetings, writing letters, and so forth. The reading text further describes the world of business. In contrast, Paper-Based TOEFL and iBT are designed for academic needs, so the context is also about the world of college. This is clearly seen in texts taken from biological texts, history, phrases, astronomy, and so forth. In addition, the topics in the listening also about conversations between student-lecturers or public lectures. The second consideration is the degree of difficulty. TOEIC can be said to be easier than Paper-Based TOEFL and iBT. The grammatical part of TOEIC that is combined into one with the reading part is simpler, not as complicated as the grammar in Paper Based TOEFL which is very complicated because it contains the academic sentence pattern which is usually used in scientific writing in the journal. There are no grammatical sessions on iBT but the reading is very long and sounds academic, so it is not suitable for the world of business.

Apart from the advantages described above, TOEIC also has its drawbacks. The TOEIC test offered, especially in Indonesia, consists only of two-hour listening and reading sessions; there is no speaking test. The ability to speak is not detected separately but only seen from the score of listening. It is assumed that when the score in the session is good then the ability to speak is also good. This is debatable. Whereas the world of business requires someone who has communicative skills, such as speaking, writing, making notes, synthesizing, summarizing and paraphrasing. Such skills are measured by TOEIC and Paper-Based TOEFL.

To cover the above deficiencies, that is, to detect the ability to speak, the company can use an interview (oral). This is ideal but not practical. It is ideal because it measures what should be measured. Measuring the ability to speak should be done by interviewing the person to see if he or she can speak fluently and accurately according to the situation. It is not practical because the oral test in the form of interview will take a lot of time and cost a lot of money. For example, the company has to interview 500 prospective employees, how much time is needed? In this case, TOEIC is superior because it can be used to test a large number of participants at the same time and all of test items are multiple-choice so they can be easily corrected. In addition, TOEIC is an international standard tool, so its reliability cannot be doubted.

For College and University Graduates

The question is, which is more appropriate: request the students to have a TOEFL score in the first semester or last semester before graduation? The answer to this question should be in line with the objectives of the Paper-Based TOEFL (PBT). The purpose of PBT is to predict students' readiness to participate in the academic activities in college and university and succeed their study because PBT only tests students' ability to understand spoken language and the ability to read textbooks. Thus, if the college and universities request students to have the score at the end of the study, it is no longer relevant to the purpose of PBT. Therefore, this policy needs to be reviewed.

Ideally, in the first semester, students are required to submit TOEFL score with a minimum score of about 450 indicating that the student is ready to carry out academic activities, such as reading books and listening to English lectures. Then, in the final semester before graduation, students are required to have TOEIC score to show their readiness to enter the workforce. TOEIC score certificates can be used to apply for jobs so that the company no longer needs to conduct TOEIC tests.

Conclusions

The above discussions bring us to the following conclusions. First, TOEFL is a trusted proficiency test, parallel to other proficiency tests such as IELTS, TOEIC which have different purposes. Second, in Indonesia, there are two types of TOEFL test in circulation and still being used: Paper-Based TOEFL and iBT which are used for academic purposes and TOEIC for work and business affairs. Therefore, the English language proficiency tool more appropriate for the world of business or company is TOEIC, not TOEFL, because of its context and practicality according to the initial design. When speaking skills of the employee are required, it is proposed that there is an additional test of the oral interview that to detect the speaking skill. Finally, the TOEFL requirement for undergraduate students at college and universities is not based on an appropriate analysis. Paper-Based TOEFL for students should be requested by the time they are in the first semester since it aims to predict their success in their studies. At the end of the course, students should have a TOEIC certificate in order to apply for jobs.

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