**Students’ Difficulties in Answering “Structure and Written Expression” TOEFL-like at STKIP PGRI Sidoarjo**

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**Abstract:** This study was conducted by the aims to investigate the types of questions which were difficult in TOEFL-like and to find the students’ difficulties in answering the ‘Structure and Written Expression’ of TOEFL-like. The subjects of this study were the batch 5 students of Master of English Education (S2 MPBI) at STKIP PGRI Sidoarjo who had TOEFL test as the placement test in taking master-degree. This research applied descriptive qualitative method. The instruments were TOEFL Test and interview. The data collection were taken from Longman Complete Course for the TOEFL written by Deborah Phillips. The results showed that There are 18 items (45%) categorized ‘difficult’. Meanwhile, there are 22 items (55%) categorized into ‘very difficult’. There are several reasons of students’ difficulties in answering the ‘Structure and Written Expression’ on the TOEFL-like done as the placement test. First, no preparation in advance. Second, lack of vocabulary mastered. Third, difficult test because of the first time they take the TOEFL-like. Lastly, limited time provided.

**Keywords**: *TOEFL-like, Students’ Difficulty, Structure and Written Expression*

**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini dilakukan dengan tujuan untuk mengetahui jenis-jenis soal yang sulit dalam *TOEFL-like* dan untuk mengetahui kesulitan mahasiswa dalam menjawab *'Structure and Written Expression*' dari *TOEFL-like*. Subjek penelitian ini adalah mahasiswa Batch 5 program Magister Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris (S2 MPBI) STKIP PGRI Sidoarjo yang mengikuti tes *TOEFL-like* sebagai tes penempatan dalam mengambil gelar magister. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif. Instrumen yang digunakan adalah Tes *TOEFL-like* dan wawancara. Pengumpulan data diambil dari *Longman Complete Course* untuk *TOEFL* yang ditulis oleh Deborah Phillips. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat 18 soal (45%) yang dikategorikan 'sulit'. Sementara itu, terdapat 22 soal (55%) yang dikategorikan 'sangat sulit'. Ada beberapa alasan kesulitan siswa dalam menjawab *'Structure and Written Expression*' pada *TOEFL-like* seperti yang dilakukan saat tes penempatan. Pertama, tidak ada persiapan sebelumnya. Kedua, kurangnya penguasaan kosakata. Ketiga, tes sulit karena baru pertama kali mengikuti *TOEFL-like*. Terakhir, waktu yang disediakan terbatas.

**Kata kunci**: *TOEFL-like, Kesulitan Mahasiswa, Structure and Written Expression*

**INTRODUCTION**

The capability of mastering English language in globalization era is a significant thing regarding that English as an international language mostly used in many countries around the world. Measuring the English proficiency of a non-native speaker of English, TOEFL is the internationally accepted standard of English being applied (Fanani, in Hajri, Jufrizal, & Wahyuni, 2018, p. 93). TOEFL, Test of English as a Foreign Language, is undoubtedly known as the most used examination in the admission process of foreign students to college and university in the United States and also it is required by English-language colleges and universities. Moreover, TOEFL test has a very good reputation in the international levels because it is recognized by the top universities for its accuracy testing techniques covering Listening Comprehension, Structure and Written Expression, Reading Comprehension and Writing.

TOEFL provides students the opportunity to prove the capabilities in mastering English as well. The language used in the TOEFL reflects real-life English language usage in the university lectures, classes and laboratories (Mufidah, 2012, p. 1). It means the language used in TOEFL is the same language applied by lecturers when they are in the teaching activities within learning concepts with students. Thus, by taking this kind of test, students can be able to explore their English skills and measure the understanding in mastering the English in the international standard.

Concerning the TOEFL, as it is argued by Hajri, Jufrizal, & Wahyuni, (2018), there are some purposes why people and/or students take the TOEFL. First, people take TOEFL in order to ensure their ability as a second language or their foreign language. Second, they have to pass the graduation requirement in the university level which means that the requirement has become one of the obligations for the students who will pass the college study. Third, they have to apply for particular things such as by taking their master/doctoral degree or applying particular jobs either abroad or inside the country.

Furthermore, there are three types of TOEFL namely: (1) Paper Based Test (PBT), (2) Computer Based Test (CBT) and (3) the internet Based Test (iBT). The university may also administer a TOEFL-like or a TOEFL-equivalent test, or a TOEFL prediction, such as by the center of language studies or by the language laboratory within the university. This kind of TOEFL test is locally administered by the university, and only used for internal usages in order to examine the students’ English proficiency (Noviyenty, 2018, p. 55). On TOEFL, there are several sections being examined; listening, speaking, grammar or structure, reading, and writing that they are depending on TOEFL types taken. Listening Comprehension which measures ability to understand English as it is spoken Structure and Written Expression measures ability to recognize language that is appropriate for standard written English and Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension measures ability to understand nontechnical reading matter. In Indonesia, the TOEFL test is originally conducted by English Language System (ELS), a specific institution for TOEFL Test, known as Institutional TOEFL.

A number of universities in Indonesia determine TOEFL score as the graduation standard requirement for students and those who want to continue study in higher level (Munaida, 2016, p. 1). In English department of Master of English Education (S2 MPBI) at STKIP PGRI Sidoarjo, the students get the placement test as the requirement in taking the master-degree. Since the “test is measuring English proficiency covering many skills and aspects such as listening, reading, and structure and written expression, the students find difficulties to do the test involved” (Mahmud, 2014, p. 2). Based on these facts, the researchers believe it is essential to know the mastery of English Department students in TOEFL-like at STKIP PGRI Sidoarjo and also to know the type of questions which considered difficult by the students. Based on the description above, the researchers formulate the problems of the study as followed: (1) What types of questions in TOEFL of Structure and Written Expression are very difficult and difficult for students to answer? and (2) How are the students’ difficulties in answering the TOEFL (Structure-Written Expression) at STKIP PGRI Sidoarjo?

**REVIEW OF RELATED THEORIES**

**TOEFL**

TOEFL, Test of English as a Foreign Language, is a standardized test evaluating the English proficiency of people whose native language is not English. This kind of test is primarily required among the colleges and universities. According to Mufidah (2012, p. 3), “The TOEFL evaluates the potential success of an individual to use and understand standard American English at a college level which is required for non-native applicants at many US and other English- speaking colleges and universities. Moreover, it becomes the product of the Educational Testing Service (ETS) contracted by the private, non-profit firm, the College Board to administer the test in institutions in the US.

There are several sections being examined called: listening comprehension, structure and written expression, reading comprehension, and test of written English depending on TOEFL types involved. TOEFL PBT, known as TOEFL Paper Based Test, has three sections namely: listening section, structure and written expression section, and reading section. One of the three sections, structure and written expression, the knowledge of English grammar is being tested. Structure and grammar are two things different but they are similar and related each other.

**Kinds of TOEFL Test**

On the TOEFL Test, there are three kinds of test classifications as mentioned by Mufidah (2012):

1. The Internet-based Test (IBT). The TOEFL IBT is well-known as a test that assesses students’ proficiency in the type of English in an academic environment which is administered on the internet. The exam takes about four hours to complete and integrates four essential skills covering: reading, listening, writing, and speaking.
2. The Computer-Based Tests (CBT). This kind of test, firstly introduced in July 1998, became the first critical step toward a long-term goal of enhancing assessments by using electronic technology to test more complex skills. A primary goal of the TOEFL program is to provide more general information than it has in the past about applicants’ English proficiency. New types of questions were added to the Listening and Reading sections; these new question types moved beyond multiple-choice questions. In the test, the computer was programmed to continuously find questions of an appropriate difficulty for test takers of all performance levels (ETS Team, Princeton, 2007:8; cited in Mufidah, 2012).
3. PBT is the most conventional one regarding it uses paper. It still becomes favorite among the students because TOEFL PBT is made-up as the easier and the cheapest one. Moreover, the local institutions or companies in Indonesia still accept the certificate of TOEFL PBT as long as the institutions which held TOEFL are legally reliable.

**The Structure of TOEFL-like**

There are two versions of the TOEFL: the paper-based exam, and the more common internet-based exam. The paper-based test is now given only where the internet-based version of the test is unavailable. The internet based TOEFL has four sections: reading, listening, speaking, and writing. The paper-based TOEFL has a test of structure and written expression instead of a speaking section. There are 140 number of questions administered in 115 minutes and the score scale is 310 – 677 covering the three categories of tests. First, in Listening Comprehension, the test is used in order to measure the ability to understand English including short and long conversations and short talks or lectures. Second, in the section of Structure and Written Expression, the test in mainly focused on the ability to recognize standard written English. Lastly, in part of Reading Comprehension, the test is concerned to the ability to read and understand short passages at the university level (Mufidah, 2012).

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

**Method**

This study was conducted by using descriptive qualitative research. It is lined by Fraenkel & Wallen (2006), “Qualitative data of the research are collected in the form of words, phrases, and sentences by using description forms them rather than numbers”. Moreover, this study applied a descriptive research which describes the situation to gain information focusing on the current status of the issues and it is pointed to determining of the nature of situation as it exists at the time of study (Ary. D., et.al., 2010). This study was aimed to find out the types of question which are categorized into very difficult and difficult on the TOEFL-like and to analyze the students’ difficulties in answering the Structure and Written Expression section of TOEFL-like. It was done at STKIP PGRI Sidoarjo. The researchers conducted the study on September 7th, 2020.

**Subjects**

In qualitative research, a subject is identified as a number of people who have a similar characteristic (Creswell, 2012: 142). The subjects of this research were the batch students 5 of Master of English Education degree (S2 MPBI) at STKIP PGRI Sidoarjo who were having TOEFL test as the placement test in master-degree program taken. There were 20 students who were classified as the subjects of this study.

**Instruments**

The researchers use two instruments called: first, a standardized test of ‘Structure and Written Expression’ of TOEFL taken from TOEFL books of Longman Complete Course for the TOEFL written by Deborah Phillips and second, interview guideline to find out the students’ difficulties in answering the TOEFL test.

The first instrument is used to answer the first question consisting the types of questions which classify into very difficult and difficult categories. Then, the second instrument is interview in order to get the detail information about the students’ difficulties in answering the TOEFL as proposed by Arikunto (2013, p. 270). In line with Gay & Diehl (Munaida, 2016, p. 29), for descriptive research the sample of research should be 10% or more. The researcher decided 4 students to participated in interview session. Means that it was 20% of the total sample. There were two questions which are asked by researcher on the interview containing:

1. Why do you choose the alternative answer in your test?
2. What are your problems or difficulties in structure and written expression section in the TOEFL?

**Data Collection Procedure**

The data were collected through test answering the first formulated problem supported by Longman Complete Course for the TOEFL written by Deborah Phillips. The students were test in provided time. TOEFL test consists of one section called Structure and Written Expression (40 questions for 25 minutes). In analyzing the interview data, the researchers transcribed the interview recording to the 4 selected students in order to gain detail information answering the second formulated problem of the study. Then, the answers of the interview were classified to be interpreted. Lastly, the researchers drew the conclusion based on the data examined in the study.

**Data Analysis**

After all of the data were collectedd, the researchers examined the data by using descriptive qualitative, it was done to allow the researchers to give information on how the research was done and analysed the data through the description forms. Then, the interpretation of data was needed to describe the significant meaning of data concerning the data findings. To interpret the difficulty level of the questions in TOEFL, the researchers modified the theory of Robert L. Thorndike and Elizabeth Hagen who originally divided the category into four namely: (1) very difficult category, (2) difficult category, (3) fair category and (4) easy category as followed:

$$P=\frac{B}{Js}$$

Adopted from: Mufidah (2012)

P = Proportion (difficulty Index)

B = Number of correspondents who have correct answer

Js = Number of correspondents

Table.1 Interpretation of the difficulty level of the questions in TOEFL

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **The Number of P** | **Interpretation** |
| 0.00 < 0.29  | Very difficult |
| 0.30 < 0.49 | Difficult |
| 0.50 – 0.69  | Fair  |
| > 0.70  | Easy  |

 Adapted from: Mufidah (2012)

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This research conducted to answer two formulated problems called: (1) the types of questions which were very difficult and difficult for the students and (2) to find the students’ difficulties in answering the ‘Structure and Written Expression’ of TOEFL-like. The test was done as the placement test among the batch 5 students of Master of English Education at STKIP PGRI Sidoarjo.

**Findings**

By conducting the study, the researchers formulated the two statements of problem containing (1) the types of questions categorized into ‘very difficult’ and ‘difficult’ to be answered and (2) the students’ difficulties in answering the ‘Structure and Written Expression’ through the test done. After analyzing the data examined in this study, the researchers found some findings as follows:

Table.2 Index of difficulty of Structure and Written Expression Items

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No.** | **No. of Items** | **TCA** | **TIA** | **ID** | **Category** |
| 1 | 1 | 15 | 5 | 0.38 | Difficult |
| 2 | 2 | 15 | 5 | 0.38 | Difficult |
| 3 | 3 | 10 | 10 | 0.25 | Very Difficult |
| 4 | 4 | 15 | 5 | 0.38 | Difficult |
| 5 | 5 | 11 | 9 | 0.28 | Very Difficult |
| 6 | 6 | 14 | 6 | 0.35 | Difficult |
| 7 | 7 | 7 | 13 | 0.18 | Very Difficult |
| 8 | 8 | 15 | 5 | 0.38 | Difficult |
| 9 | 9 | 14 | 6 | 0.35 | Difficult |
| 10 | 10 | 17 | 3 | 0.43 | Difficult |
| 11 | 11 | 8 | 12 | 0.20 | Very Difficult |
| 12 | 12 | 5 | 15 | 0.13 | Very Difficult |
| 13 | 13 | 4 | 16 | 0.10 | Very Difficult |
| 14 | 14 | 3 | 17 | 0.08 | Very Difficult |
| 15 | 15 | 5 | 15 | 0.13 | Very Difficult |
| 16 | 16 | 17 | 3 | 0.43 | Difficult |
| 17 | 17 | 17 | 3 | 0.43 | Difficult |
| 18 | 18 | 13 | 7 | 0.33 | Difficult |
| 19 | 19 | 10 | 10 | 0.25 | Very Difficult |
| 20 | 20 | 6 | 14 | 0.15 | Very Difficult |
| 21 | 21 | 6 | 14 | 0.15 | Very Difficult |
| 22 | 22 | 17 | 3 | 0.43 | Difficult |
| 23 | 23 | 6 | 14 | 0.15 | Very Difficult |
| 24 | 24 | 15 | 5 | 0.38 | Difficult |
| 25 | 25 | 14 | 6 | 0.35 | Difficult |
| 26 | 26 | 13 | 7 | 0.33 | Difficult |
| 27 | 27 | 8 | 12 | 0.20 | Very Difficult |
| 28 | 28 | 8 | 12 | 0.20 | Very Difficult |
| 29 | 29 | 7 | 23 | 0.18 | Very Difficult |
| 30 | 30 | 12 | 8 | 0.30 | Very Difficult |
| 31 | 31 | 4 | 16 | 0.10 | Very Difficult |
| 32 | 32 | 11 | 9 | 0.28 | Very Difficult |
| 33 | 33 | 13 | 7 | 0.33 | Difficult |
| 34 | 34 | 12 | 8 | 0.30 | Difficult |
| 35 | 35 | 8 | 12 | 0.20 | Very Difficult |
| 36 | 36 | 4 | 16 | 0.10 | Very Difficult |
| 37 | 37 | 12 | 8 | 0.30 | Difficult |
| 38 | 38 | 10 | 10 | 0.25 | Very Difficult |
| 39 | 39 | 12 | 8 | 0.30 | Difficult |
| 40 | 40 | 4 | 16 | 0.10 | Very Difficult |

Notes: ***TCA*** is total number of correct answers, **TIA** is total number of incorrect answers, **ID** is index of difficulty

Based on the result findings seen on the table 2, There are 40 questions in ‘Structure and Written Expression’ section on the TOEFL test. It can be described that the questions are considered difficult if the index of difficulty less than 0,30. Therefore, questions number 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 16, 17, 18, 22, 24, 25, 26, 33, 34, 37 and 39 are in difficult category. Thus, the category of ‘difficult question’ consists 18 items. Meanwhile, questions number 5, 7, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21, 23, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 35, 36, 38 and 40 are categorized as ‘very difficult question’. The ‘very difficult’ questions contain 22 items. Concerning to the result findings of the study, it can be figured out that all of the students had the same difficulties in answering the questions in the TOEFL test.

In order to answer the first statement of the study about the types of question consisting the difficult and very difficult categories, the researchers provided the following table to classify the types of difficult questions based on the index of difficulty as below:

Table.3 Item Number and Type of difficult and very difficult questions of Structure and Written Expression

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **No.** | **Item Number** | **Types of Questions** |
|  | 1 | Appositive  |
|  | 2 | Subject + Verb  |
|  | 3 | Coordinate conjunction |
|  | 4, 40 | Past participle  |
|  |  5 | Preposition  |
|  | 6 | Parallel Structure (with coordinator)  |
|  | 7 | Identifying the Main Verb  |
|  | 8 | Expression of Quantity |
|  | 9 | Inverted subject verb (with the question word) |
|  | 10 | Present Participle after the Preposition |
|  | 11 | Reduced Adjective Clause |
|  | 12, 38 | Active and Passive Meaning |
|  | 13 | Object of Preposition |
|  | 14 | Inverted Subject Verb (negative expression) |
|  | 15 | Adjective Clause  |
|  | 16 | Base Verb After Modal  |
|  | 17 | Uncountable Noun  |
|  | 18, 19 | The Correct Tense  |
|  | 20 | The Correct Form of Superlative Degree  |
|  | 21 | The Correct Form of Adjective |
|  | 22 | Base Verb after “to” |
|  | 23 | Use the Correct Possessive Pronoun Reference  |
|  | 24 | The Use of Adverb Form correctly  |
|  | 25 | Adjective after linking verbs  |
|  | 26 | The use of Correct Form of Passive  |
|  | 27 | Parallel Structure (with the correlative conjunction) |
|  | 28 | The use of Superlative Degree Correctly  |
|  | 29, 31 | Singular and Plural Noun  |
|  | 30 | The Correct Use of Other, the other, and another |
|  | 32 | The Use of Article |
|  | 33 | The correct use of like, unlike, likely |
|  | 34 | The Use of Have and Had Correctly |
|  | 35 | The Correct Use of Preposition |
|  | 36 | Irregular Plural Noun |
|  | 37 | Distinguish the person from the thing  |
|  | 38 | The Passive Meaning  |
|  | 39 | The correct use “live” “alive” and “living” |

Based on the table 3 above, it can be identified that all of the questions in the TOEFL as the placement test are categorized into ‘difficult’ and ‘very difficult’ questions. Means that all of the questions on the TOEFL through the ‘Structure and Written Expression’ were difficult to be done. The types of question contain: Appositive, Subject + Verb, Coordinate Conjunction, Past Participle, Preposition, Parallel Structure (with coordinator), Identifying the Main Verb, Expression of Quantity, Inverted Subject Verb (with the question word), Present Participle after the Preposition, Reduced Adjective Clause, Active and Passive Meaning, Object of Preposition, Inverted Subject Verb (negative expression), Adjective Clause, Base Verb After Modal, Uncountable Noun, The Correct Tense, The Correct Form of Superlative Degree, The Correct Form of Adjective, Base Verb after “to”, Use the Correct Possessive Pronoun Reference, The Use of Adverb Form Correctly, Adjective after Linking Verbs, The Use of Correct Form of Passive, Parallel Structure (with the correlative conjunction), The Use of Superlative Degree Correctly, Singular and Plural Noun, The Correct Use of “Other, the other, and another”, The Use of Article, The correct use of “like, unlike, likely”, The Use of Have and Had Correctly, The Correct Use of Preposition, Irregular Plural Noun, Distinguish the Person from the Thing, The Passive Meaning, and The Correct Use “live” “alive” and “living”.

**Discussion**

Answering the first formulated problem in this study, the researchers examined the data through the result of the TOEFL done by the batch 5 of master-degree students (S2 MPBI) at STKIP PGRI Sidoarjo. There are 22 items in the ‘Structure and Written Expression’ which categorized into ‘very difficult’ question. Meanwhile, 18 items are classified into ‘difficult’ question. In line with Arikunto (2013), had suggested the four categories of index difficult namely: easy, fair, difficult and very difficult which classified as: the easy category in range of > 0.70, the fair category in range of 0.50 – 0.69, the difficult category in range of 0.30 – 0.49 and the very difficult category 0.00 < 0.29. Focusing on the research findings in the study, among 40 items of the ‘Structure and Written Expression’ in the TOEFL are classified into ‘difficult’ and ‘very difficult’ questions. As viewed on the table 1, it seems that the range of index as the category ‘difficult’ is 0.10 – 0.28 containing 18 items (45%). Meanwhile, the range of index as the category ‘very difficult’ is 0.30 – 0.43 containing 22 items (55%).

There are 37 kinds of questions in the ‘Structure and Written Expression’ on the TOEFL. They are Appositive, Subject + Verb, Coordinate Conjunction, Past Participle, Preposition, Parallel Structure (with coordinator), Identifying the Main Verb, Expression of Quantity, Inverted Subject Verb (with the question word), Present Participle after the Preposition, Reduced Adjective Clause, Active and Passive Meaning, Object of Preposition, Inverted Subject Verb (negative expression), Adjective Clause, Base Verb After Modal, Uncountable Noun, The Correct Tense, The Correct Form of Superlative Degree, The Correct Form of Adjective, Base Verb after “to”, Use the Correct Possessive Pronoun Reference, The Use of Adverb Form Correctly, Adjective after Linking Verbs, The Use of Correct Form of Passive, Parallel Structure (with the correlative conjunction), The Use of Superlative Degree Correctly, Singular and Plural Noun, The Correct Use of “Other, the other, and another”, The Use of Article, The correct use of “like, unlike, likely”, The Use of Have and Had Correctly, The Correct Use of Preposition, Irregular Plural Noun, Distinguish the Person from the Thing, The Passive Meaning, and The Correct Use “live” “alive” and “living”.

The second research question consists the students’ difficulties in answering the ‘Structure and Written Expression’. In order to answer this statement, the researchers conducted the interview as the second instrument of the study. Among 40 items assessed in ‘Structure and Written Expression’, most of the students have difficulties in answering the TOEFL done. There are several reasons that make them do not do well. Based on the interview conducted by the researchers, the reasons can be categorized as: first, they did not know the rules because they never learned the material of TOEFL before; second, they have learned it but they might forget what kinds of grammar applied are. Concerning to the reasons, it can be said true or possible happened during the test because it has been more than years for the students since their last grammar subjects in strata-1 (S1). The students also do not practice the lessons when they have test as the placement test in master-degree. Therefore, students forget the lessons when they are taking TOEFL. This also support the explanation of Winkel (in Hajri, Jufrizal, & Wahyuni, 2018, p. 102), they argued “Insensibleness is incapability to dig what has been noticed, processed, and inserted into mind.” Means that ‘forgetfulness’ might happen because of some factors such as lack of practice, interference of materials they learn in other courses after structure courses, and lack of interest. It can happen because it was not used for a long time. However, the main reasons why the items become difficult were, first the students do not have a well understanding about the sentences’ structure, format; second the students do not have a well understanding about the form of the questions in ‘Structure and Written Expression’.

Based on the results of the interview which involved 4 students as the samples. The 4 students were chosen randomly based on the research findings. The interview section concern on the structure and written expression questions which most students had made error through the items of TOEFL questions. In the first question of the interview stated, *“Why do you choose the alternative answer in your test?”* the respondent 1 said *“I don’t even know what kind of the question is… So, I chose that answer randomly but at least I guess it can be the correct answer”.* It can be said that the student did not know well the type of questions in the TOEFL regarding that no preparation before the test done. Meanwhile, it is supported by result of the interview, as said by the respondent 3 *“I have lack of mastering vocabulary, thus I don’t know which the correct answer is… I have never got test of TOEFL when I was in S1. It was the first time for me I did the TOEFL”*. As the statement mentioned, it can be said that the student has no preparation, so he does not know how to solve the difficulties in answering the items in the ‘Structure and Written Expression’ of TOEFL-like.

The second question is related to the students’ difficulties in answering the test. It is stated “*What are your problems or difficulties in structure and written expression section in the TOEFL-like?”* Based on the results of the interview, as said by the respondent 4 *“I couldn’t recognize the types of questions and I don’t have any preparation for the test. So, I think it is difficult to do the test with no preparation before.”* Meanwhile, the respondent 2 said *“I think I forget the grammar because it was already long time I learned about grammar. Second, I don’t know how to answer and choose the correct answer because the questions were very difficult to me. And it was my first time taking TOEFL-like.”* Then, respondent 1 said *“the time is very quick, it makes me confused”*. Many students fail in grammar section of TOEFL-like because of their time management (King & Stanley; in Hajri, Jufrizal, & Wahyuni, 2018, p. 103). It can be assumed that the students didn’t read the questions carefully and they have to finish in hurry. Concerning the results of the interview, the main reasons of students’ difficulties in answering the test are: there is no preparation before taking the test, students have lack of vocabulary, TOEFL is difficult for them as it is the first time for them taking the test, lastly it can be said that time of test is limited.

**CONCLUSION**

There are 40 questions in ‘Structure and Written Expression’ section on the TOEFL-like test as the placement test for the batch 5 of master-degree students at STKIP PGRI Sidoarjo (S2 MPBI). All of the items are considered as ‘difficult’ regarding the index of difficulty in range of 0.30 < 0.49 and ‘very difficult’ regarding the index of difficulty in range of 0.00 < 0.29. There are 18 items (45%) categorized ‘difficult’. Meanwhile, there are 22 items (55%) categorized into ‘very difficult’.

There are several reasons of students’ difficulties in answering the ‘Structure and Written Expression’ on the TOEFL done as the placement test. First, there is no preparation in advance. Second, students have lack of vocabulary. Third, TOEFL is assumed as difficult test regarding it is first time they take the TOEFL. Lastly, time provided is very quick.

**SUGGESTION**

TOEFL becomes one of the requirements in English students as bachelor’s degree and master-degree or even doctoral-degree. It means they are projected to get a high score in the test. However, many students take TOEFL and they have minimum scores which are not expected by them because of some reasons. As the result of this study, it is directly suggested to:

1. English students: to practice more and be careful in answering the test. The students need to understand well in the grammar materials toward the TOEFL.
2. Lecturers: to explain the grammar material deeply. It is because there are some topics that are hard for the students to answer and they don’t know the types of questions given. By explaining the grammar and material in TOEFL clearly, they student will have more knowledge and more preparation to do the next test they are going to take.

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