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## THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TOEFL SCORE AS A REQUIREMENT FOR SCRIPT EXAMINATION AT SYIAH KUALA UNIVERSITY

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### Abstract

*In this era of globalization the role of English as an international language is becoming more and more important. Moreover, English language will be more highly needed when AFTA, APEC, and AEC are implemented in the near future. It is needed for education, commerce, industry, career development, employment opportunity, human resource development, etc. For this purpose, Syiah Kuala University expects its students to have good command of English when they graduate in hope that they will be able to compete not only at national level, but also at international level when they work. One way to motivate the students to prepare themselves with English proficiency is through the implementation of TOEF score which was made as one of the requirements for the students who want to register for script examination. This paper then wants to discuss the implementation of TOEFL score as a requirement for script examination, some problems and possible solutions to the problems.*

**Keywords:** *Implementation, TOEFL score, script examination.*

### INTRODUCTION

In this era of globalization, it is almost impossible to communicate with people around the world without mastering English which has become the world's global language. Graddol (1997) states that around one in five of the world's population speaks English, and English has become the language of international commerce, popular culture and the Internet. In addition, Pakir (2000) states that English will remain the global language for big business, the language of commerce, and language of knowledge-based economics for at least the next fifty years. Harmer (2007) also mentions English as the number one language in the world.

Realizing the importance of English, a decree was issued by the Minister of Education in 1967 in which the goal is to accelerate the process of state and nation development, to establish relationships among the nations in the world, and to manage good foreign relationships. However, the result of English language teaching in Indonesia is still far under that expectation. The index of English competence of Indonesian community tends to be stagnant and left behind neighboring countries. The result of survey conducted by Education First (EF) in 60 countries in 2013 reveals that the level of English proficiency of Indonesian people is left far behind ASEAN countries. With the index 53.44, Indonesia lies only on the two levels above Vietnam, ranked at 25; Indonesia is just below South Korea, far below Malaysia and Singapore ranking at 11 and 12 (Soaloon & Thoib, 2013).

Indonesia, especially Aceh is rich in natural resources, nevertheless the natural resources will be useless without having potential and capable human resources. The natural resources cannot be

exploited without skills to process raw materials to become value-added materials. Therefore, good quality human resources are highly needed to process the rich natural resources to speed up the development in Aceh.

Considering the above arguments, some measures must be taken to improve the English mastery of university students and lecturers. For this, Rector of University of Syiah Kuala (Unsyiah) issued a decree, number 080 Year 1999 requiring the students to show their English proficiency proved by a certificate of TOEFL equivalent with passing grade score 450 at minimum. Since the issuance of the decree and its implementation in 1999, the implementation has had a number of problems and measures taken to find the solution. This article, therefore, makes an attempt to highlight the implementation, some problems and possible solutions.

### THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TOEFL SCORES FOR SCRIPT EXAMINATION

Students of Syiah Kuala University are required to submit their TOEFL scores when registering for *Meja Hijau* Examination (script or thesis examination). This is the realization of the decree number 080 year 1999 issued by Rector. The required score according to this decree is at least 450. However, according to Academic Administration Guide for Undergraduate and Diploma Program (*Panduan Administrasi Akademik Program Sarjana dan Diploma Universitas Syiah Kuala*) Year 2010, the minimum TOEFL score required is 475 although the reality still uses the previous one. How is this then implemented?

Language Center of Syiah Kuala University has been appointed as the center handling the TOEFL test. The test is conducted on weekdays except Friday from 8.00 to 16.30. During this time, the number of students taking the test is approximately 200 consisting of 65 students in each time of the test starting at 8.00 a.m., 10.00 a.m., and 14.00 p.m.

### SOME PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION

#### Problems Encountered

The implementation of the TOEFL scores as one of the requirements for students to register for their script examination has had some problems as discussed below.

#### *The lower level of English mastery*

The students' English proficiency is still low. The required TOEFL scores 450 or 477 as stated in the Rector's Decree is still far from the expectation. The result of the TOEFL test shows that most of the students cannot reach the targeted scores as required and consequently they cannot propose their script examination. The average scores obtained by the students are around 400, far below the required scores, 450 at minimum. Approximately 11% of the total number of test participants conducted each time get the expected scores, 450 not 477 as required by the decree although they have taken the TOEFL test more than five to ten times and even more than 10 times (see Figure 1).

PERMASALAHAN				
Fakultas	Jumlah Tes	Jumlah Lulus	Persentase Lulus	Lulus Setelah Ikut
Kedokteran	325	32	10%	10 kali
Keperawan	121	12	10%	10 kali
Teknik	505	41	8%	12 kali
Ekonomi	392	74	19%	5 kali
Hukum	317	22	7%	14 kali
Pertanian	382	28	7%	14 kali
MIPA	158	14	9%	11 kali
KIP [Bhs. Ing saja]	173	48	28%	4 kali
Kelautan & Perikanan	104	5	5%	
Kedokteran Hewan	164	6	4%	
Ilmu Sosial dan Politik	261	23	9%	11 kali

Data sampai bulan Maret 2015

**Figure 1.** The number of TOEFL test participants for each faculty, the whole number of tests taken, the number of participants obtaining the required scores, percentage, and the number of those who passed after taking the test (Source: Syiah Kuala University Language Center Document).

According to the surveys and research conducted in Indonesia, the main weaknesses so far, of our students in listening comprehension, structure, and reading comprehension are caused by their poor vocabulary and structures. From my personal observation and experience, I hastened to add that they also fail to understand relation between tenses, sentences as well as between paragraphs and longer discourses.

#### ***The students' lack of vocabulary***

The role of the mastery of vocabulary is very central in language use as it is the heart of language. Without grammar, little thing can be conveyed, but without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed. The problem here is that the students' vocabulary size when entering universities or colleges is very small. SLTA (Senior High School) graduates are expected to have 4000 words based on 1975 and 1984 Curriculum in senior high school including 1500 words learned at junior high school, but the reality based on a survey result shows that they only possess 1000 words and even below that number.

#### ***Linguistic environment***

Linguistic environment does not support the learning and teaching of English in Indonesia. English is considered as a foreign language in Indonesia, and therefore it is not spoken by the majority of the people. Language exposure as an input is very important for the learners of language in order for them to acquire the language (Ellis, 1998) and that according to the input hypothesis as proposed by Krashen (1998) in order that language acquisition to take place the input should be comprehensible.

#### ***The status of MKU (General Subject) on English***

This subject is considered as different from other courses. Students regard this as a second class course. They might think that without any hard struggling, they can pass the examination; at least they can get acceptable scores. So the students may not take this course seriously.

#### ***The lecturers***

There are three kinds of lecturers: (1) the English lecturers from the English Education Department, (2) those from the non-English Education Department from the faculty concerned, and (3) part-time English lecturers, those who are new graduates from masters' degree program in English Language Teaching and are seeking for permanent jobs.

#### ***Learning strategies***

Most of our students have had no idea of how to learn English efficiently, moreover how to prepare for the TOEFL test. They do not realize that learning a foreign language requires perseverance, discipline, commitment, knowledge of techniques of assimilating new habits, self-evaluation, a great deal of practices and that the whole business requires process and a long time.

#### ***The condition of teaching English as a foreign language***

The condition of teaching English as a foreign language at junior and senior high school is still poor due to English teachers' qualification, lack of facilities, teachers' commitment, and many other factors. The result of national final examination is always left behind compared to that of other provinces.

#### ***Some Possible Solutions to the Problems***

As discussed above that the implementation of the TOEFL scores has had some problems faced by both the students and the Language Center. The following are some possible solutions that may lead to overcoming the problems mentioned above.

#### ***Students' Mentoring Unit for English (UP3BI)***

This unit/program under the coordination of the Language Center started in October 2015 in odd semester and considered as a helpful program. This UP3BI is intended to improve the freshmen

students' English proficiency especially through the introduction of TOEFL in addition to taking General Subject (MKU) Bahasa Inggris.

### General Subject (MKU) English

MKU English is a general subject on English handled by *UPT Mata Kuliah Umum* (Unit of General Subjects). This course is taught commonly by young lecturers or new graduates focusing on reading skill especially the materials related to their fields of study (English for Specific Purpose) in hope that students will be able to get access to textbooks in English using basic grammatical knowledge, sufficient vocabulary and reading strategies taught by their lecturers, although it has not reached the objective (based on the writer's observation as once as coordinator and lecturer of MKU English).

The flow chart of the implementation of the students' mentoring program and the MKU English is shown in Figure 2 below.

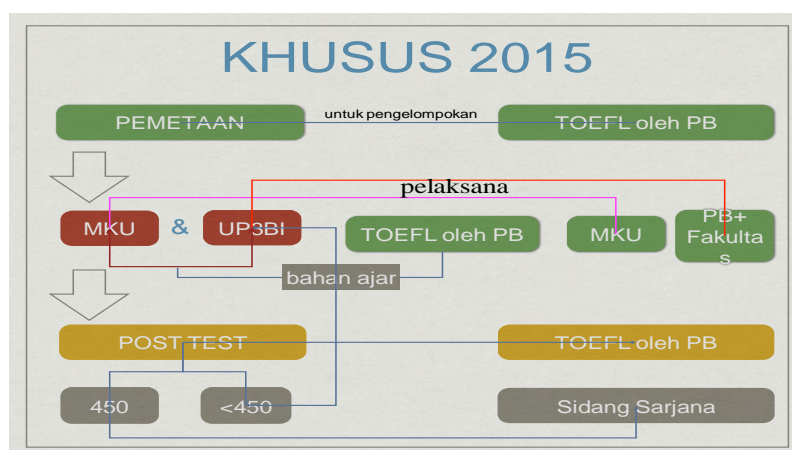


Figure 2. Flowchart of the implementation of students' mentoring and MKU English (source: Syiah Kuala University Language Center Document).

Based on Figure 2, it can be seen that the 2015/2016 entrants had to take TOEFL test (Pre-test) as a mapping of their initial English proficiency to put them in groups based on the results of the TOEFL scores, although grouping was not possible last semester due to some problems at the beginning. TOEFL test was given again as a post-test at the end of semester on MKU English to determine whether students passed or failed or achieved the minimum TOEFL score required. Scoring system is conducted by combining the MKU lecturers' scores obtained from the quizzes, midterm examination, assignment, and final examination with the post-test results on TOEFL conducted by the Language Center through the agreed scoring conversion as seen in figure 3 below.

HURUF	NILAI TOEFL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
A	477 - 500	477	480	483	487	490	493	497	500	
NILAI ANGKA DPNA =====>		85.0	87.0	89.0	91.0	93.0	95.0	97.0	99.0	
B+	450 - 473	450	453	457	460	463	467	470	473	
NILAI ANGKA DPNA =====>		75.0	76.3	77.7	79.0	80.3	81.7	83.0	84.3	
B	423 - 447	423	427	430	433	437	440	443	447	
NILAI ANGKA DPNA =====>		65.0	66.3	67.7	69.0	70.3	71.7	73.0	74.3	
C+	400 - 420	400	403	407	410	413	417	420		
NILAI ANGKA DPNA =====>		55.0	56.6	58.1	59.7	61.2	62.8	64.3		
C	380 - 397	380	383	387	390	393	397			
NILAI ANGKA DPNA =====>		45.0	46.8	48.6	50.4	52.2	54.0			
D	350 - 377	350	353	357	360	363	367	370	373	377
NILAI ANGKA DPNA =====>		35.0	36.1	37.3	38.4	39.6	40.7	41.8	43.0	44.1
E	323 - 347	323	327	330	333	337	340	343	347	
NILAI ANGKA DPNA =====>		27.0	28.0	29.0	30.0	31.0	32.0	33.0	34.0	
E	273 - 320	273	277	300	303	307	310	313	317	320
NILAI ANGKA DPNA =====>		18.0	19.0	20.0	21.0	22.0	23.0	24.0	25.0	26.0
E	243 - 270	243	247	250	253	257	260	263	267	270
NILAI ANGKA DPNA =====>		9.0	10.0	11.0	12.0	13.0	14.0	15.0	16.0	17.0
E	217 - 240	217	220	223	227	230	233	237	240	
NILAI ANGKA DPNA =====>		1.0	2.0	3.0	4.0	5.0	6.0	7.0	8.0	

Figure 3. Score conversion from TOEFL scores to DPNA (Source: Unsyiah Language Center and MKU Document, 2015).

### **Time allotment**

MKU English with two hours (100 minutes) per week in only one semester is far from being sufficient. Language acquisition needs process, and of course there is no short-cut to picking it up. The students need to be exposed to sufficient amount of language practice. The more comprehensible language input exposed to them, the more language acquisition can take place. It should be allotted much more time and frequency than it is today. Therefore, it is suggested that the number of courses on MKU English should be added, at least in six semesters. In addition, sufficient infrastructure and teaching aids should be provided.

### **Teaching methods**

It is suggested that the lecturers use various techniques to make students motivated, inspired, challenged, and creative, such as discussion, jigsaw, think pair & share, pair work, group work, project based-learning, problem-based learning, etc.

### **The improvement of the English of the lecturers**

From my observation of the lecturers learning English at Intensive Program at the Language Center, I can draw a tentative conclusion that the majority of Unsyiah lecturers' English is still poor. This conclusion is corroborated by the fact that only few lecturers pass the TOEFL to qualify for overseas scholarships offered every year. Thus, if we want to improve the quality of education at Unsyiah, we should first raise the standard of English of Unsyiah lecturers who impart their knowledge to the students.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the discussion above it can be concluded that in this era of globalization the need for English as an international language is becoming more and more important. For this, Syiah Kuala University expects its students to have good command of English when they graduate. One way to motivate the students to prepare themselves with English proficiency is through the implementation of TOEFL score which was made as one of the requirements for script examination. To implement this policy, Language Center of Unsyiah administers TOEFL test for the students who want to get scores before registering for script examination. The implementation, however, has had some problems such as students' poor mastery of English as shown in the results of their TOEFL test, lack of English exposure through MKU English, the status of MKU English, and the lecturers' poor mastery of English. Some possible solutions to the problems are presented such as UP3BI, MKU English focusing on TOEFL materials, the addition of sessions for MKU English, the use of effective and innovative teaching methods, ToT for Non-English Department lecturers and students mentors, the improvement of lectures' English, and reducing class size.

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