

## **Investigating the Effect of TOEFL® Preparation Training on English Proficiency of Grade 12 Students at MAN 1 Tangerang**

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| Received: 25/06/2025 | Revised: 29/07/2025 | Accepted: 30/07/2025 |

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### **Abstract**

English proficiency plays a crucial role for senior high school students, particularly in preparing for higher education and entering the workforce. One of the most widely administered standardized tests to measure English proficiency is TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and often serves as a requirement for university admission. The aim of this study was to examine the effect of TOEFL preparation training on the English proficiency of 12th-grade students at MAN 1 Tangerang. A quasi-experimental method was implemented by using a one-group pretest-posttest design. The training program material covered skills assessed in TOEFL PBT (Paper Based test), namely listening, structure and written expressions and reading. The researchers conducted a pre-test and a post-test to measure students' English proficiency improvement. The findings of the study showed a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test results. This indicates that the TOEFL preparation training effectively improved students' English proficiency. The significance of this study is reflected in its role in developing to English language instruction at secondary schools, especially in Madrasah contexts. The educational implications suggest that integrating TOEFL preparation programs into school curricula can strengthen students' readiness for academic challenges and improve their chances of success in university entrance processes.

Keywords: TOEFL Preparation, English proficiency, standardized test

### **Introduction**

In today's globalized world, English proficiency has become an essential skill, especially with the rapid development of technology, communication, information, education, and industry—all of which require individuals to be competent in English. For students at MAN 1 Tangerang, English skills are considered a key foundation not only for academic success but also for future career opportunities and meaningful contributions to society. As part of its commitment to improving graduate quality, particularly in foreign language proficiency, MAN 1 Tangerang continues to enhance its English instruction.

However, interviews with English teachers at the school revealed that many students still struggle with both spoken and written English, mainly due to limited abilities in listening, reading, and grammar. These core skills are particularly important for students planning to continue to higher education, especially since some universities require a certain level of English proficiency as part of their admission process. In Indonesia, one of the most frequently used standardized test for assessing English proficiency is the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language). Therefore, schools are encouraged to place greater emphasis on preparing students for this type of standardized test.

In response to this situation, the researchers decided to implement a TOEFL preparation training program for 12th-grade students at MAN 1 Kota Tangerang, considering its potential to improve students' foreign language competence. While the program had been introduced, its actual effectiveness in improving students' English proficiency also needed to be systematically evaluated.

According to Renandya et al. (2018), language proficiency refers to one's ability to use the language effectively for various communicative purpose. This encompasses the mastery of key language components such as pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, speech, and also writing skills. In order to assess English proficiency in both instructional and certification contexts, several standardized tests are commonly used, including CEFR, TOEFL, TOEIC, and IELTS. Brown & Abeywickrama (2018) said that TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) has been acknowledged as one of the most frequently used standardized assessments worldwide. They added that TOEFL, developed by ETS, is commonly used in the field of English Language Teaching to assess individuals' English proficiency not only for academic but also professional purposes. There are several formats of the TOEFL, such as Paper-Based Test (PBT) and Internet-Based Test (iBT) (Sharpe, 2010; Barnes, 2016; Wang, 2019). The PBT includes of three main sections, namely: listening comprehension, structure and written expression, and reading comprehension. Meanwhile, the IBT assesses four core language skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

In Indonesia, the Paper-Based TOEFL (PBT) is more widely used than the other ones because of its affordability and practicality. It continues to be recognized by many companies and postgraduate institutions so that numerous universities still use it as a tool for assessing students' English proficiency. As its name suggests, this test is conducted on paper—both the questions and answer sheets. According to ETS on its website, the PBT version of TOEFL— or also commonly known now as TOEFL ITP — is made to assess the academic English proficiency of non-native speakers using materials derived from academic and social contexts. This test evaluates skills in listening comprehension, structure and written Expression as well as reading comprehension. Caromawati (2017) mentioned several strengths and weaknesses of the PBT test. Its main advantages include high reliability and practicality, as well as being relatively low-cost compared to other high-stakes exams. However, its exclusive use of multiple-choice questions is seen as a drawback, as it tends to test literacy over meaningful learning outcomes. The PBT TOEFL does not offer sufficient opportunities for students to showcase specific learning outcomes, particularly in areas such as creativity, oral communication, writing competence, and social interaction skills.

TOEFL PBT continues to be a common requirement for various purposes in the Indonesian context, such as scholarship applications, university admission, job applications, and graduation requirements. Many private colleges, for instance, require students to pass a certain TOEFL score before graduation. Damanik & Pasaribu (2025) stated that students usually take TOEFL preparation as a requirement in their subject curriculum and its scheduling varies based on each faculty's semester plan. The test result serves as a measurement of students' English proficiency. Despite its limitations, it is clear that the TOEFL PBT remains relevant, and therefore many institutions offer TOEFL preparation courses to help students achieve the expected score.

TOEFL preparation is a common practice especially in EFL countries where not all formal educations could supply students with enough knowledge to tackle down the test. TOEFL preparation training typically covers test-taking strategies, familiarization with the test format, and targeted practice in each skill area. In the high school context, such training is expected to boost students' confidence and language competence. TOEFL preparation a learning program that is designed to enhance student English skills especially listening, structure, and reading skills in the academic English language (Sakurai, 2020; Maharani & Putro, 2021). Akmal et al. (2022) added that TOEFL preparation classes are generally structured to provide students with extensive exposures through various practice activities covering the TOEFL test components including listening, structure and written expression, and reading comprehension. According to Ma & Cheng (2016), taking a test preparation course is considered as one of the most time-efficient ways to be prepared for the TOEFL test. This type of course generally involves familiarization with the test format and requirements, the application of effective test-taking strategies (Yu, 2012), and strategies for improving particular English skills (Liu, 2014). TOEFL preparation classes typically explore both language learning strategies --such as skimming or identifying key information-- and test-taking strategies, such as effective time management during the exam (Wang , 2019).

Several previous studies have examined the effectiveness of TOEFL preparation programs on students' achievement. Muslimin (2014) reported that students taking the intensive TOEFL coaching class indicated scores improvements by achieving higher scores that surpassed the pre-test scores. In this case it includes the listening section, structure and written expression, and reading comprehension. Meanwhile, Perdani, (2015) reported that strategy training is effective in enhancing TOEFL listening performance in EFL learners. It familiarizes learners with question types and cognitive strategies, strengthens listening skills, and promotes positive attitudes toward English learning. In addition, Sailuddin (2022) claimed that students who participated in a TOEFL preparation course experienced significant score improvement between the pre-test and post-test in the reading section. The course led to overall score gains, with the most notable improvement observed in reading. Djamereng et al., (2021) conducted an experimental study with undergraduate students, revealing significant score improvements after a structured TOEFL training course. Similarly, Kaniadewi & Asyifa (2022) found that students from various disciplines who participated in TOEFL preparation courses exhibited notable gains in their test performance.

Although many studies have discussed the impact of TOEFL preparation programs on EFL learners' proficiency, most of them focus on university students or adult learners. There is

still a lack of research that specifically explores how such programs affect high school students, especially those in Madrasah contexts. This study aims to fill that research gap by examining the effects of TOEFL preparation training on the English proficiency of Grade 12 students at MAN 1 Tangerang. Based on the background above, this study seeks to address the following research question: Does TOEFL preparation training have a significant effect on the English proficiency of Grade 12 students at MAN 1 Tangerang? The main objective of this research is to investigate the effectiveness of TOEFL preparation training in improving the English proficiency of grade 12 students at MAN 1Tangerang.

The researchers expect this study to have significance both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this research contributes to the academic discussion on English language education and the importance of standardized test preparation at the secondary school level. Practically, the findings can serve as a reference for educators and school administrators in implementing and developing more effective TOEFL preparation programs.

## **Method**

This research employed a quantitative approach. As stated by Creswell (2012), quantitative research seeks to describe phenomenon through the collection of numerical data which is then analyzed using statistically based methods. The researchers used quasi-experimental method (pre-experimental research) by applying a one group pre-test/post-test design. Quasi-experimental research is commonly used evaluate the effect of an intervention on a particular group without involving full randomization (Creswell, 2012). This design was chosen because the researcher did not use random assignment or a control group, but still aimed to measure changes in participants' proficiency following the intervention. There was only one group that got treatment in this design, which consisted of 28 students from grade 12 of MAN 1 Tangerang, This group of participants was assessed on their English proficiency before (pretest) and after (posttest) undergoing the TOEFL preparation training.

At the beginning of the study, the researcher administered a pretest to find out the students' English proficiency prior to their participation in TOEFL preparation training. The training was conducted in three sessions, each lasting 120 minutes. The training materials covered the listening section, the structure and written expression section, and the reading comprehension section, adapted from the Longman Complete Course for the TOEFL Test (Philips, 2008). The first session focused on preparing for the listening section, the second on the structure and written expression section, and the last on the reading section. Discussions were encouraged during the sessions to enhance understanding and engagement. Students also received supplementary support in the form of a short simulation test conducted in the final session before the post-test. This simulation was designed to help students familiarize themselves with the format. After completing the training, post-test was carried out to evaluate the effect of the treatment. The pre-test and post-test scores were collected and analyzed to determine the mean scores and average improvement.

In order to analyze the data, this study employed descriptive statistics and a paired samples t-test. Descriptive statistics gave a general overview of the results, such as the average (mean), the middle score (median), and the variation in scores (standard deviation). The paired samples T-test was conducted to compare the scores before and after the TOEFL preparation

training. This test was performed using SPSS to see whether the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores was statistically significant. These methods helped the researchers understand the impact of the TOEFL preparation training on students' English proficiency. The following is a comparison of the the pre-test and post-test results based on statistical hypotheses.

Ho: If the Sig (2-tailed) value is  $<0.05$ , there is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test results.

H1: If the Sig (2-tailed) value is  $> 0.05$ , there is no significant difference between pre-test and post-test results.

## Results and Discussion

### Results

The descriptive analysis in Table 1 presents the minimum and maximum scores, mean scores and standard deviation of the students' English proficiency test before and after the TOEFL preparation training (pre-test and post-test)

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Pre-Test and Post-Test

	Pre Test	Post Test
N	28	28
Minimum	340	387
Maximum	501	517
Mean	424.36	442.39
Std Deviation	37.144	46.307

The pretest was conducted at the beginning of the first session to find out students' English proficiency prior to their participation in the TOEFL preparation training. It can be seen in Table 1 that the mean of pre-test score was 424.36, with the highest and lowest scores being 501 and 340, respectively. After attending three sessions of TOEFL preparation training, students completed the post-test. The descriptive statistic of the post-test scores reveals that the mean score was 442.39, meanwhile the highest score was 517 and the lowest score was 387. This result indicates an improvement in the mean score, maximum score and minimum score. The mean score increased 18.03 points, from 424.36 in the pretest to 442.39 in the post-test. Additionally, the standard deviation decreased from 46.307 to 37.144, indicating a more consistent performance among students after the intervention.

A paired sample t-test was utilized to compare students' scores before and after the intervention. The test helped to find out if the changes in scores were significant. The following table 2 shows results of the paired samples test for the pre-test and post-test scores:

Table 2. Results of the Paired Samples t-Test on Pre-Test and Post-Test

	Paired Differences				t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower				Upper
Pretest- Post_test	-18.036	27.261	5.152	-28.606	-7.465	-3.501	27	.002

To compare the differences between the pre-test and post-test results, the researchers used a paired samples T-test to draw conclusions from the data. The mean pretest score was 424.36, while the mean posttest score increased to 442.39, showing a mean difference of 18.04 points. The test results showed a statistically significant difference,  $t(27) = 3.50$ ,  $p = 0.002$ , which is smaller than the significance level of 0.05. According to Cohen et al. (2011), if the significance level is less than 0.05, the alternative hypothesis (H1) is accepted. Since the significance value statistic (p) obtained was 0.0016 which is below the threshold 0.05, then alternative hypothesis (H1) is therefore accepted. This indicates that the improvement in students' scores was quite significant, and the TOEFL preparation training had a meaningful effect on their performance.

## Discussion

The descriptive statistics indicate a noticeable improvement in students' English proficiency after participating in the TOEFL preparation training. The average score increased from 424.36 in the pre-test to 442.39 in the post-test, with a gain of 18.04 points. This improvement suggests that the students benefited from the three-session training, which likely helped them become more familiar with the test format, question types, and strategies for answering efficiently. Additionally, the decrease in standard deviation from 46.31 to 37.14 shows a more consistent performance across the group, meaning that not only did the average score improve, but the gap between the highest and lowest performers narrowed slightly as well. This could reflect more equitable learning outcomes across students with different starting proficiencies.

The result of the paired sample t-test further supports this improvement. The test showed a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores, with  $t(27) = -3.501$  and  $p = 0.0016$ , which is below the conventional alpha level of 0.05. This confirms that the increase in students' scores was not due to chance but was indeed a meaningful result of the TOEFL preparation training. As stated by Cohen (2011), when the significance level is lower than 0.05, the alternative hypothesis (H1) is accepted. Therefore, the findings of this study indicate that TOEFL preparation training can have a positive and significant effect on students' English proficiency.

This research aims to answer the question whether TOEFL preparation training has a significant effect on English proficiency of grade 12 students at MAN 1 Tangerang. The results of this study suggest that participating in a TOEFL preparation training can effectively improve

students' English proficiency. This outcome aligns with the findings of a study conducted by Dewi et al, (2015), which reported a significant difference in students' scores before and after taking part in a TOEFL preparation course. A similar result was also reported by Puspasari (2017), who revealed that taking part in a TOEFL preparation program improved students' TOEFL scores significantly. In addition, a study by Fitriani & Wahjusaputri (2021) concluded that TOEFL training not only helped students gain a better understanding of the test but also contributed to improved scores.

This research indicated that the TOEFL preparation training was effective in enhancing the English proficiency of the grade 12 students at MAN 1 Tangerang. There are several reasons why the TOEFL preparation training was effective in improving students' English proficiency. First, the program helped students become familiar with the TOEFL format through repeated practice, guided exercises, and targeted coaching in listening, structure, and reading. This regular exposure allowed students to understand the test structure and manage their time better, which contributed to improved performance (Puspasari, 2017; Matingfan, 2018; Rifiyanti et al., 2023). Second, the course provided students with test-taking strategies that helped them approach the exam more effectively. This is in line with the findings of Damankesh & Babaii (2015), which claimed that the use of such strategies taught in TOEFL preparation had a significant positive impact on students' exam results. Third, the program also helped boost students' motivation and confidence through structured activities such as simulation tests and peer discussions (Triana et al., 2023).

However, some participants did not experience any improvement in their scores; in fact, a few showed a decline. This indicates that test scores are not solely influenced by coaching, but also by factors such as student motivation, prior English proficiency and learning strategies (Liu, 2014; Masfufah, 2018), as well as study habits (Matingfan, 2018). In addition, low scores may also be linked to challenges commonly faced by students when taking the TOEFL test, including limited language skills, insufficient practice, lack of motivation, and individual learner differences (Halim & Ardiningtyas, 2018). Students' performance could improve effectively if the duration of the preparation program were longer and more intensive (Nguyen, 2007; Maharani & Putro, 2021). Rifiyanti et al., (2023) also emphasized that individual coaching, grammar reinforcement, reading strategies, and the encouragement of self-study can support better test readiness.

To sum up, TOEFL preparation training had a positive and significant effect on the English proficiency of Grade 12 students at MAN 1 Tangerang. The results of this research indicate that students should be adequately prepared before taking the TOEFL test, and it is highly recommended that they participate in a TOEFL preparation coaching program. The findings of this study suggest further educational implications for English language teaching in high school settings, particularly in Madrasah contexts. First, the implementation of TOEFL preparation programs can help students become more familiar with the structure and demands of standardized tests, while also improving their overall English proficiency. Second, this approach supports teachers in providing more targeted instruction, especially in listening, structure, and reading skills—areas that are commonly assessed in the TOEFL PBT. Third, schools may also consider integrating test-taking strategies into the curriculum so that students can be better equipped to increase their competitiveness in higher education admissions. Furthermore, such

training programs may boost students' self-confidence, foster independent learning habits, and encourage a more strategic approach in language learning.

## Conclusion

This study concludes that the TOEFL preparation training resulted in a positive and significant effect on the English proficiency of Grade 12 students at MAN 1 Kota Tangerang. The students' scores indicated improvement after attending the training, and statistical analysis confirmed that this improvement was significant. The results highlight the value of structured TOEFL training in preparing students for higher education requirements and enhancing their academic English skills.

However, there are some limitations in this study. The research was conducted using a one-group pretest-posttest design without a control group, which may affect the generalizability of the results. Additionally, the short duration of the training—only three sessions—might have limited the development of students' language proficiency. Therefore, future studies are encouraged to employ control groups and extend the intervention period to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of TOEFL preparation programs.

Based on the results of this study, it is recommended that schools or colleges continue to offer TOEFL preparation programs as part of their academic support. Future programs should consider extending the training period and including more interactive activities to increase student engagement.

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