

**INVESTIGATING UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' CHALLENGES AND
STRATEGIES IN ANSWERING TOEFL PREDICTION TEST: A CASE
STUDY AT AN ISLAMIC HIGHER INSTITUTION**

THESIS

By

Ade Bunga Izzati

NIM : 06012682327022

Program Study Magister Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris



FACULTY OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION

SRIWIJAYA UNIVERSITY

2025

**INVESTIGATING UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS'
CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES IN ANSWERING TOEFL
PREDICTION TEST: A CASE STUDY AT AN ISLAMIC
HIGHER INSTITUTION**

A THESIS

by:

Ade Bunga Izzati

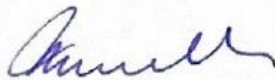
Student Number: 060126823270022

Magister Program in Language Education

Approved by:

Advisor 1,

Advisor 2,



**Machdalena Vianty, M.Ed., M.Pd., Ed.D.
NIP. 197411242000122001**



**Eryansyah, S.Pd., M.A., Ph.D.
NIP. 196907181995121001**

Certified by:

Head of Magister Program in Language Education

Sriwijaya University,



**Sary Silvhianny, M.Pd., M.A., Ph.D.
NIP. 197708112002122003**

**INVESTIGATING UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS'
CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES IN ANSWERING TOEFL
PREDICTION: A CASE STUDY AT AN ISLAMIC HIGHER
INSTITUTION**

A THESIS

by:

Ade Bunga Izzati

Student Number: 06012682327022

Magister Program in Language Education

Approved by:

Advisor 1,



**Machdalena Vianty, M.Ed., M.Pd., Ed.D.
NIP. 197411242000122001**

Advisor 2,



**Eryansyah, S.Pd., M.A., Ph.D.
NIP. 196907181995121001**



Dean,
**Dr. Hartono, M.A.
NIP. 196710171993011001**

**Head of Magister Program in Language
Education,**



**Sary Silvhiany, M.Pd., M.A., Ph.D.
NIP. 197708112002122003**

**INVESTIGATING UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS'
CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES IN ANSWERING TOEFL
PREDICTION: A CASE STUDY AT AN ISLAMIC HIGHER
INSTITUTION**

A THESIS

by:

Ade Bunga Izzati

Student Number: 06012682327022

Magister Program in Language Education

had been examined and passed on:

Day : Monday

Date : July 28th, 2025

EXAMINATION COMMITTEE

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| 1. Chairperson | : Machdalena Vianty, M.Ed., M.Pd., Ed.D. |
| 2. Secretary | : Eryansyah, S.Pd., M.A., Ph.D. |
| 3. Member | : Prof. Drs. H. Soni Mirizon, M.A., Ed.D. |
| 4. Member | : Dr. Rita Inderawati, M.Pd. |

Palembang, July 28th, 2025

**Approved by,
Head of Magister Program in Language Education**



**Sary Silvhiany, M.Pd., M.A., Ph.D.
NIP. 197708112002122003**

INVESTIGATING UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES IN ANSWERING TOEFL PREDICTION TEST: A CASE STUDY AT AN ISLAMIC HIGHER INSTITUTION

ABSTRACT

This study examines the specific challenges and strategies faced by 43 seventh-semester students in the English Language Education Study Program at a State Islamic University in Palembang, South Sumatra, when taking the TOEFL Prediction test. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected through questionnaires and interviews and analysed using SPSS and thematic analysis. In the Listening Comprehension section, students struggled with idiomatic expressions and grouped phrases ($M = 3.28$). High scorers employed strategies such as prediction, focused listening, and exposure to various English dialects, while lower scorers tended to guess. In the Structure and Written Expression section, common issues included time pressure and carelessness ($M = 3.30$), with strategies such as structural analysis, elimination, and checking clause-level grammar. In the Reading Comprehension section, students found detail-oriented questions ($M = 3.16$) and interpreting the author's attitude ($M = 2.84$) particularly difficult. Effective strategies included skimming, scanning, summarizing, and paraphrasing. High-performing students demonstrated strong metacognitive strategies planning, monitoring, and emotional control while others struggled to apply known strategies under time constraints. These findings emphasize the importance of explicit strategy instruction and consistent practice with authentic materials to improve TOEFL performance and promote learner autonomy.

Keywords: *TOEFL Prediction Test, learning strategies, test-taking challenges, English Education*

A thesis by Magister Program in Language Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Sriwijaya University

Name : Ade Bunga Izzati

Student Number : 06012682327022

Advisor 1,



Machdalena Vianty, M.Ed., M.Pd., Ed.D.
NIP. 197411242000122001

Advisor 2,



Eryansyah, S.Pd., M.A., Ph.D.
NIP. 196907181995121001

The Head of Magister Program in Language Education,



Sary Silviani, M.Pd., M.A., Ph.D.
NIP. 197708112002122003

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned,

Name : Ade Bunga Izzati

Student's Number : 060126823270022

Study Program : Magister Program in Language Education

Certify that the thesis entitled "Investigating Undergraduate Students' Challenges and Strategies in Answering TOEFL Prediction Test: A Case Study at an Islamic Higher Institution" is my work, and I did not do any plagiarism or inappropriate quotation against the ethics and rules commended by the Ministry of Education of Republic of Indonesia Number 17, 2010 regarding plagiarism in higher education. Therefore, I deserve to face court if I am found to have plagiarized this work.

Palembang, July 28th, 2025

The Undersigned,



Handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ade Bunga Izzati'.

Ade Bunga Izzati
NIM. 06012682327022

DEDICATION

With deep gratitude and endless love, I dedicate this thesis to those who have always been by my side at every step of my journey...

My parents

Anthoni Ansori, S.Ag., M.Si. and Neti Herawati, S.Ag., who have never tired of offering support and prayers.

My sisters

Marlina Puspita Nugra, M.Pd. and Malaya Aura Dini, who has always been an encourager and loyal companion on this journey.

My Partner

M. Ravi Kurniawan, A.Mdt., who has been offering support with love on this journey thesis.

My success in completing this academic journey is the result of their love, sacrifices, and unwavering prayers, which have faithfully supported me in facing every challenge. This thesis is a true reflection of their steadfast love and support

MOTTO

“Trust yourself, do the best”

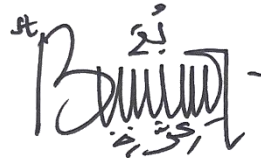
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim, all praises and gratitude are due to Allah Subhanahu Wata'ala, the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful, the Almighty, and the Ruler of all creation, for granting the writer the strength, guidance, and ability to complete this academic endeavor. Peace and blessings be upon the Prophet Muhammad SAW, who has been a guiding light for all humanity. This thesis was written as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for attaining a Master's degree in the Magister Program in Language Education at Sriwijaya University. On this occasion, the writer would like to express her sincere gratitude and appreciation to the following individuals and parties:

1. Dr. Hartono, M.A., Dean of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education at Sriwijaya University, for fostering an academic environment that supported the completion of this thesis.
2. Machdalena Vianty, M.Ed., M.Pd., Ed.D. and Eryansyah, S.Pd., M.A., Ph.D. the writer's advisors, for their invaluable guidance, insightful feedback, and encouragement throughout the research and writing process.
3. All lecturers and staff of the Magister Program in Language Education at Sriwijaya University, for their knowledge, support, and assistance in the academic journey.
4. All participants who willingly contributed to this study, enabling the writer to gather essential data for the research.

Palembang, July 28th, 2025

The Writer



Ade Bunga Izzati

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION.....	i
DEDICATION.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENT.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iv
LIST OF TABLES	v
LIST OF APPENDICES	vi
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Background of the Study.....	1
1.2 Problems of the Study	3
1.3 Objectives of the Study	4
1.4 Significances of the Study.....	4
CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW	5
2.1 The Nature of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Testing	5
2.2 Overview of TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) ..	6
2.2.1 Types of TOEFL Tests	7
2.2.2 The TOEFL Prediction Test	8
2.3 Skills Assessed in the TOEFL	9
2.4 Challenges in Answering TOEFL Test	11
2.5 Strategies in Answering TOEFL Test	12
2.6 Previous Related Studies	13
CHAPTER III RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	16
3.1 Research Design.....	16
3.2 Participants	16
3.3 Data Collection	17
3.4 Data Analysis	20

CHAPTER IV FINDING AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Findings	22
4.1.1 The Questionnaire Result	22
4.1.1.1 Listening Comprehension	22
4.1.1.2 Structure and Written Expression	24
4.1.1.3 Reading Comprehension	25
4.1.2 Interview Result	26
4.1.2.1 Challenges in Answering TOEFL Prediction Test.....	28
4.1.2.1.1 Listening Skill	28
4.1.2.1.2 Structure and Written Expressions	39
4.1.2.1.3 Reading Comprehension	30
4.1.2.2 Time Management Issues.....	32
4.1.2.3 Preparation and Study Approaches	33
4.1.2.4 Test-taking Strategies	36
4.2 Interpretation	38

CHAPTER V CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS.....43

5.1 Conclusion.....	43
5.2 Suggestions	43

REFERENCES.....45

APPENDICES48

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	Participants of the Study	17
Table 2	Instruments of the Study	17
Table 3	The Questionnaire of the Challenges of TOEFL Prediciton	18
Table 4	Interview Questions	19
Table 5	Likert four-point scale range interpretation	21
Table 6	The Results Analysis of Students' Challenges in Answering Listening Comprehension	22
Table 7	The Results Analysis of Students' Challenges in Answering Structure and Written Expression.....	24
Table 7	The Results Analysis of Students' Challenges in Answering Reading Comprehension	25
Table 8	The Key Theme of the Interview Results	26

LIST OF APPENDICES

- Appendix A The Questionnaire of Students Challenges In Answering TOEFL Prediction
- Appendix B Interview Question
- Appendix C The Questionnaire Results of Listening Comprehension Challenges
- Appendix D The Questionnaire Results of Structure And Written Expression Challenges
- Appendix E The Questionnaire Results of Reading Comprehension Challenges
- Appendix F Interview Transcript
- Appendix G Validity Test The Questionnaire of Listening Variables
- Appendix H Validity Test The Questionnaire of Structure and Written Expression Variables
- Appendix I Validity Test The Questionnaire of Reading Comprehension Variables
- Appendix J Reliability Test of the Questionnaire
- Appendix K Loa Artikel
- Appendix L Surat Balasan Izin Penelitian
- Appendix M Surat Keterangan Pengecekan Similarity
- Appendix N Documentation

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This part elaborates background, problem of the study, objective of the study, and significance of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

As the results of large number of English speakers around the world, English is now widely used in social, political, and economic settings, making it one of the most important languages in world (Clyne & Sharifian, 2008). Therefore, English is the most widely used as a global language in the world. English bridges in uniting individuals from all over the world, regardless of their nationalities, cultural origins, or races (Pandarangga, 2015). In addition, as the most widely spoken language in today's world, English provides an opportunity to enhance one's life and intellectual ability (Tillayeva, 2020). In conclusion, the usage of English serves not only as a tool for communication, but also as a unifier of people all over the world.

The widespread use of English highlights the need for reliable assessments to measure language skills across various fields. Someone's ability in using English language skills can be measured by an English test. One of the tests is TOEFL which stands for the Test of English as a Foreign Language. It represents a prominent standardized examination for assessing English language proficiency and is widely adopted by numerous English as a Foreign Language (EFL) countries across the globe to evaluate someone's fluency in English. TOEFL is available in different versions, namely the TOEFL Paper-Based Test (PBT), TOEFL Computer-Based Test (CBT), TOEFL Internet-Based Test (iBT), and TOEFL Institutional Testing Program (ITP) (Bania, 2024). The TOEFL Institutional Testing Program (ITP) is a version of the TOEFL exam crafted to measure English proficiency, primarily targeting academic contexts within institutions. In other words, an institution itself conducts the ITP for its

students, providing a convenient and readily available method of evaluating English language abilities for educational objectives.

However, doing a TOEFL test is challenging. There are previous studies that have reported the challenges that EFL students had in doing the section of TOEFL prediction test. For example, the study conducted by Pramesti (2023) found that general difficulties students commonly struggle with implied questions in the reading section due to limited vocabulary and time constraints. Strategies like rereading and focusing on keywords are often used to improve comprehension. In addition, the study by Rina and Tiarina (2021) reported that students often struggle with implied questions in the TOEFL reading section because they do not have a large enough vocabulary and the test time limits make it hard to think deeply about the questions. To overcome these challenges, they use strategies such as rereading the passage to get a better understanding and focusing on keywords to identify the main ideas quickly. Another study done by Akmal et al. (2020) found that students primarily struggled with determiners, conjunctions, adjective clauses, apposition phrases, and reduced clauses in the structure section. In the written expression section, the main difficulties included adverb connectors, subject-verb agreement, clause of concession, relative clauses, and quantifiers.

At one of the universities in Palembang, TOEFL test is one of the requirements for the students to complete their undergraduate study. Based on the regulation of the university, the English Education Study Program students must meet the minimum TOEFL prediction score of 500 (Personal Information, RS). However, there are many students of English Education Study Program students who have failed the TOEFL Prediction; they have not reached the required score and must do the test again. Because the implementation of the TOEFL has been doing since 2014 at this university and the fact that many students have failed the test, conducting an investigation concerning the students' challenges in doing the test is worth doing. This is the aim of this present study, that is, to find out the challenges that the students encounter in doing the TOEFL Prediction.

Although various studies have investigated students' challenges in answering TOEFL tests, most have primarily focused on difficulties within a single section. For example, Permata Augustia (2022) examined students' reading comprehension in her study "Students' Perception About USEPT-like Reading Test for English as a Foreign Language Students at Sriwijaya University". Similarly, Arvina Yudiagustin (2023) focused on listening strategies in "Students' Strategies in Answering the Listening Section of USEPT: An Investigation at the English Education Study Program of Sriwijaya University", while Risca Afriliani explored listening difficulties in "The Difficulties Faced by English Students in Doing Listening Comprehension of TOEFL Test at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang". In contrast, this research aims to deliver a broader perspective by examining the challenges students face across all sections of the TOEFL Prediction Test, including Listening Comprehension, Structure and Written Expression, and Reading Comprehension.

Therefore, the researcher seeks to provide deeper insights into the overall difficulties encountered by students when taking the TOEFL test by raising the topic "Investigating Undergraduate Students' Challenges and Strategies in Answering TOEFL Prediction: A Case Study at an Islamic Higher Institution". This study is expected to offer a more comprehensive understanding of student challenges and serve as a foundation for developing more effective English language learning strategies in the future.

1.2 Problems of the Study

The problem of this study is formulated in the following research questions.

- 1) What are challenges the English Education Study Program students of Islamic Higher Institution encounter in answering ITP TOEFL Prediction?
- 2) What are the students' strategies in coping with the challenges?

1.3 Objective of the Study

Based on the research questions, the objectives of this present study are as follows.

- 1) To find out the challenges the English Education Study Program students of Islamic Higher Institution encounter in answering TOEFL Prediction
- 2) To find out the students' strategies in coping with the challenges

1.4 Significance of the Study

By identifying the specific challenges students encounter in the TOEFL Prediction test, this study aims to provide insights that can lead to targeted interventions. Addressing these challenges can potentially enhance students' performance in the test, which is crucial for their academic progression, particularly in an English-medium educational environment. Understanding the difficulties students face in the TOEFL Prediction test can inform educators and administrators about the areas that need more emphasis in English language instruction. This insight can lead to the development of more effective teaching methodologies and curriculum adjustments tailored to address these challenges, thus improving the overall quality of English education within the program UIN Raden Fatah Palembang has set a minimum TOEFL Prediction score requirement for students in the English Education Study Program. By investigating the challenges students encounter in meeting this requirement, the study directly contributes to the university's goal of ensuring academic success and fulfilling the necessary criteria for program completion. The findings may provide valuable insights for researchers, educators, and policymakers interested in understanding the complexities of language assessment and proficiency development, particularly within the context of English education programs in non-native English-speaking countries like Indonesia

REFERENCES

- Adam, S., & Magfirah, S. (2021). Implementation of Problem-Based Learning Model in TOEFL Preparation Program at Khairun University. *ELS Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, 4(4), 424–430. <https://doi.org/10.34050/elsjish.v4i4.18611>
- Aeni, N. (2024). Students' Challenges and Approaches to Comprehending the TOEFL Reading Section. *International Journal of Education Research and Development*, 4(2), 81–90. <https://doi.org/10.52760/ijerd.v4i2.75>
- Akmal, S., Rasyid, M. N. A., Masna, Y., & Soraya, C. N. (2020). EFL LEARNERS' DIFFICULTIES IN THE STRUCTURE AND WRITTEN EXPRESSION SECTION OF TOEFL TEST IN AN INDONESIAN UNIVERSITY. *Englisia: Journal of Language, Education, and Humanities*, 7(2), 156–180. <https://doi.org/10.22373/ej.v7i2.6472>
- Alfi Khoiruman, M., Hadi Irawan, D., & Kelautan Banyuwangi, A. (2025). Analysing the Role of English Language Proficiency (TOEFL) in Increasing Job Opportunities in the Global Industry Sector. *Huele: Journal of Applied Linguistics, Literature and Culture*, 5(1).
- Angga Gunantar, D., & Dewi Rosaria, S. (2023). Difficulties of Non-English Study Program Students in Carrying Out the Institutional TOEFL Test. *English Education: Jurnal Tadris Bahasa Inggris*, 16(1), 119. <https://ejournal.radenintan.ac.id/index.php/ENGEDU>
- Anggia Putri, C., Rotua Sinaga, D., & Meisuri. (2025). Language Testing as a Reflection Tool in Students' Perspective: Insight for EFL Assessment. *JELITA: Journal of English Language Teaching and Literature*, 6(1), 128–139.
- Augustia, P. (2022). *STUDENTS' PERCEPTION ABOUT USEPT-LIKE READING TEST FOR ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDENTS AT SRIWIJAYA UNIVERSITY A THESIS*.
- Bania, A. S. (2024). EVALUATING TOEFL PREDICTION TEST PROFICIENCY AMONG LECTURERS AND STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SAMUDRA. *English Review: Journal of English Education*, 12(1), 157–166. <https://doi.org/10.25134/erjee.v12i1.8594>
- Chapelle, C. A., Enright, M. K., & Jamieson, J. M. (2008). *Building a Validity Argument for the Test of English as a Foreign Language* (Carol A. Chapelle, Mary K. Enright, & Joan M. Jamieson, Eds.). ESL & Applied Linguistics Professional Series.

- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research* (Fourth Edition). Pearson education.
- ETS. (2005). *Test and Score Data Summary for TOEFL ® Internet-Based Test*. www.ets.org
- Fadhilah R, I., Kamsina, & Aliyah N, N. (2021). *THE ANALISYS OF STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN ACCOMPLISHING TOEFL MINIMUM SCORE AS THE FINAL REQUIREMENT*. 7(02).
- Friska, Y., & Syafi, M. T. (2023). Available online at. *Lexeme : Journal of Linguistics and Applied Linguistics*, 2(1). <http://openjournal.unpam.ac.id/index.php/LJLAL>
- Karmilah, M. (2024). Comparative Analysis Of TOEFL Prediction Score Results And Students' Quizzes Score. *International Journal of Scientific Multidisciplinary Research*, 2(3), 187–194. <https://doi.org/10.55927/ijsmr.v2i3.8274>
- Madya, S., Retnawati, H., Purnawan, A., Nur Hidayanto, N. H. P. S., & Kartianom. (2020). The range of TOEFL scores predicted by TOEP. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 10(2), 491–501. <https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v10i2.28591>
- Marfu'ah. (2020). *STUDENTS' PROBLEMS IN ANSWERING TOEFL AT ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDY PROGRAM OF IAIN PALANGKA RAYA*. STATE ISLAMIC INSTITUTE OF PALANGKA RAYA.
- Moglen, D. (2015). The Re-Placement Test: Using TOEFL for Purposes of Placement. *The CATESOL Journal* , 1. www.ets.org,
- Mustafa, F., & Putra, T. M. (2020). Strategies Proposed for Listening Comprehension in PBT TOEFL: Tricks that Do Not Work. *Celt: A Journal of Culture, English Language Teaching & Literature*, 20(2). <https://doi.org/10.24167/celt.v20i2>
- Narayana, I. G. P. P., & Soepriyanti, H. (2023). Students' Difficulties in Coping with TOEFL Test: A Case Study in a Postgraduate English Program of a State University in Mataram. *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding*, 10(6), 321. <https://doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v10i6.4780>
- Ojha, L. P. (2022). World Englishes, Monolingual Bias, and Standardized Tests in a Multilingual World: Ideologies, Practices, and the Missing Link. *Journal of NELTA*, 27(1–2), 88–105. <https://doi.org/10.3126/nelta.v27i1-2.53197>
- Powers, D. E. (2010). The Case for a Comprehensive, Four-Skills Assessment of English-Language Proficiency. *Educational Testing Service* , 14. www.ets.org

- Pramesti, R. A. (2023). Investigating Students' Strategies and Difficulties in Facing TOEFL Reading Section. *Journal of English Language and Education*, 8(2), 52–62. <https://doi.org/10.31004/jele.v8i2.414>
- Rezkiani. (2019). *THE DIFFICULTIES FACED BY THE EFL STUDENTS IN THE TOEFL TEST (A Case Study At English and Literature Department)*.
- Ridwan, Dewi, R., & Nappu, S. (2024). An Analysis of Graduate Students' Challenges in Answering TOEFL Structure and Writing Questions. *International Journal of Social Science and Human Research*, 07(12). <https://doi.org/10.47191/ijsshr/v7-i12-64>
- Rina, P., & Tiarina, Y. (2021). Journal of English Language Teaching An Analysis of English Department Students' Difficulties in Answering TOEFL Test of Listening Comprehension. *Journal of English Teaching*, 10(1), 28–35. <https://doi.org/10.24036/jelt.v10i1.1113555>
- Safitri, M., Wulyani, A. N., & Suharyadi, S. (2021). The correlation between students' reading and listening score in a standardized test of TOEFL. *Jurnal Penelitian Dan Pengkajian Ilmu Pendidikan: E-Saintika*, 5(2), 127–138. <https://doi.org/10.36312/esaintika.v5i2.472>
- Ulminarika. (2023). Students' Difficulties in Answering the TOEFL Listening Test. *English LAnguage Study and Teaching (ELASTE)*, 4(1).
- Wahyuningsih, C., Mahbub, M. A., & Al Fauzi, F. (2024). Exploring Students Difficulties in Answering Reading TOEFL Section Test. *International Journal of Education Research and Development*, 8(1), 41–49. <http://ejurnal.ujj.ac.id/index.php/LIN>