

ENGLISH MASTERY OF STUDENTS OF ENGINEERING FACULTY SRIWIJAYA UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC YEAR 2010/2011

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Abstract: This study aims at finding out English mastery of students of Engineering Faculty Sriwijaya University academic year 2010/2011. Research instrument was in the form of test given to 513 students. The result shows that the majority of students (79.54% or 417 students) still have a problem to get the minimum score of TOEFL-like test as required by Engineering Faculty Sriwijaya University. The Students' English mastery is relatively problematic if they just learn English based on the curriculum or if they do not learn English at all during their formal lectures. This problem can be overcome if students learn English independently during their lectures. TOEFL-like test scores required by Engineering Faculty Sriwijaya University still needs to be improved in order to achieve the demand of Sriwijaya University as a world class university in the future.

Keywords: TOEFL-like test, English

INTRODUCTION

English is one of the languages that has been widely accepted as an international language for various purposes. This means that English has been widely used as a means of communication in various sectors of human life in the world. As a result, either directly or indirectly, English has been taught to many people in the world.

In Indonesia, English language teaching conducted in both formal and non-formal education. Teaching English in the formal education sector was carried out starting from elementary school up to college. At this time, the status of English teaching in primary schools (SD) is still an optional subject while the status of English teaching in junior high school (SMP) and Senior High School (SMA) or Vocational School (SMK) is a compulsory subject. The status of English Teaching in college is different from the status of English teaching in elementary, junior high and high school / vocational school. The difference lies in the flexibility of the English language teaching itself. In college, English language instruction tailored to the needs of the department or study program at their respective colleges. Until recently, in the department or study program in college, teaching English can be in the form of compulsory subjects or optional subject. Even there can be a department or study program that does not list English as subject to be taught.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sriwijaya University as one of the state universities in Indonesia also applies the same policy; whether English teaching is necessary or not depends on the existing majors and study programs. Engineering Faculty as one of the faculties in Sriwijaya University implements English as one of the compulsory subjects in the Personality Development Course Group (MPK) for the Department of Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Chemical Engineering, and Mining Engineering. However, English is not taught to Architecture and Civil Engineering students. The credit for English in Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, and Chemical Engineering is 2. While the credit for Mining Engineering Department is 6. The Distribution of English credits can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1. English Credit Semester for Sains I in the FT Unsri

Major	Credit
Electrical Engineering	2
Mechanical Engineering	2
Chemical Engineering	2
Mining Engineering	6
Technical Architecture	0
Civil Engineering	0

Sources: Handbook of Academic and Student Affairs Unsri, 2010

Starting from the academic year 2006/2007, Sriwijaya University has implemented a policy for all students accepted at Sriwijaya University that they must follow the TOEFL-like test. This test is conducted by the Language Institute of Sriwijaya University before the first semester of college starts. As the implementation of the national policy for English teaching and in order to make the Sriwijaya University as an international university (world class university), starting from the academic year 2009/2010 with decree No. 042/HD/PT/Kep/2009 dated June 10, 2009 Rector of Sriwijaya University requires all students of Sriwijaya University to have minimum standard of English proficiency when they join their thesis exam at the end of their studies. This English proficiency is measured by a TOEFL-like test conducted by the Institute of Languages University of Sriwijaya (Unsri, 2009:27-28). The minimum TOEFL-like test scores based on the Decree of the Rector of the University of Sriwijaya for all students FT Unsri starting from academic year 2009/2010 are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Minimum English Achievement Target of FT Unsri Students Starting from academic year 2009/2010 using TOEFL-like test standard

Major	TOEFL Score
Electrical Engineering	400
Mechanical Engineering	400
Chemical Engineering	425
Mining Engineering	425
Technical Architecture	450
Civil Engineering	450

Sources: Handbook of Academic and Student Affairs Unsri, 2009:28

The minimum TOEFL-like test scores for all students in all majors in academic year 2010/2011 in Table 2 above are pre-elementary level for Electrical Engineering and Mechanical Engineering, Elementary level for Chemical Engineering and Mining Engineering, and Pre-intermediate level for Architectural Engineering and Civil Engineering (see Table 3 below). At this level, students only have very limited ability to speak English (see the score description in Table 4).

Table 3. Level of English Ability Based on TOEFL-like Test Score

Levels	TOEFL-like test Score
Real Beginner	300-350
Pre-elementary	351-400
Elementary	401-425
Pre-intermediate	426-450
Intermediate	451-475
Pre-advanced	476-500
Advanced	501-525
Post-advanced	526 - over

Sources: LB Unsri, 2009

Table 4. The TOEFL-like test score Description

Score	Description
> 600	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Able to participate effectively in the official and unofficial conversations about social and professional topics - Able to use English clearly and naturally - Can be understood by native speakers of English
570-599	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Able to communicate well and effectively on specific topics of interest - Able to communicate with confidence without any difficulty and participate in almost all official and unofficial situations - Sometimes the use of ineffective English
500-549	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Able to communicate effectively limited to the specific topics of interest - Able to communicate with confidence, but could lose the ability to communicate in a distressed situation
450-499	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Able to initiate and maintain direct communication on topics that are already known in advance - Have limited competence, but able to communicate more in a state of emergency
400-449	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Able to speak about topics that he knew - Have limited competence - commit many repetitions while communicating
350-399	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Only use the phrase remembered in an emergency situation - Can only make questions and brief statements - have limited communication ability and often do repetition
349	- very weak English skills

Source: Jajja, 2004

METHODOLOGY

Research method used in this study was descriptive method. Researcher wanted to describe or depict the variable, namely the initial English mastery of FT Unsril students academic year 2010/2011 and the English skills expected when they finish their studies at the FT Unsril. Samples of this study were all students from all majors of S-1 FT Unsril Indralaya campus academic year 2010/2011. Population and sample were 518 students. The data were collected by conducting TOEFL like test for samples. The purpose of this test is to determine the samples' initial English mastery level.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of 518 Engineering students TOEFL-like test performed before the first semester courses academic year 2010/2011 begin can be seen in Table 5, 6 and 7 below.

Table 5: Summary of Students of Electrical Engineering and Mechanical Engineering Department Engineering Faculty Sriwijaya University Campus Indralaya TOEFL-like Test Scores

Majors	Score Range		Average	Σ Score ≥ 400	Σ Score < 400
	Highest	Lowest			
Electrical Engineering	540	307	382	32	67
Mechanical Engineering	513	277	387	18	68
Average	527	292	382		
Number				50	135
Percentage				27.03	72.97
Overall Score Range	540-277				

Table 6. Summary of Students of Chemical and Mining Engineering Department Engineering Faculty Sriwijaya University Campus Indralaya TOEFL-like Test Scores

Majors	Score Range		Average	Σ Score ≥ 400	Σ Score <400
	Highest	Lowest			
Chemical Engineering	527	307	391	20	84
Mining Engineering	517	313	395	20	88
Average	522	310	393		
Number				40	172
Percentage				18.87	81.13
Overall Score Range	527-307				

Table 7. Summary of Students of Architectural and Civil Engineering Department Engineering Faculty Sriwijaya University Campus Indralaya TOEFL-like Test Scores

Majors	Score Range		Average	Σ Score ≥ 400	Σ Score <400
	Highest	Lowest			
Architectural Engineering	467	320	391	3	42
Civil Engineering	547	277	383	11	105
Average	507	299	387		
Number				16	105
Percentage				13.22	86.78
Overall Score Range	547-277				

Based on the data in Table 5, it can be identified that the English ability of majority students from all majors at FT Unsri (79.54% or 412 students) was below the minimum target (TOEFL-like test of 400, 425, or 450). Only a small number of FT Unsri students reached or exceeded the minimum target score of TOEFL-like test (20.46% or 106). In general, a very wide range of score, for example between 277 (real beginner) to 547 (post-advanced) suggests that the early English achievement of FT Unsri Campus Indralaya students vary widely.

Judging from the average scores of the TOEFL-like test for 382, 393, and 387, in general, students FT Unsri Campus Indralaya relatively problematic to achieve the minimum TOEFL-like test score required by the FT Unsri. This problem will appear at the end of their studies if they just learn English through English classes defined in their majors curriculum (2 or 6 credits) or they do not study at all during their formal lecture at FT Unsri. This problem can be overcome if they are also learning English independently outside English courses in the curriculum specified in their major, such as learning English through a variety of English courses in Palembang. This can be done because they have about 4 to 7 years learn English before they take final exams.

Next, based on the average TOEFL-like test students (382, 393, and 387) and TOEFL-like test required by the FT Unsri (400, 425, and 450), it is still far from the demands to be achieved by Sriwijaya University as international university. This is due to the fact that in an international university students must communicate well in English so that they, for example, can access a variety of knowledge and skills in English, and follow the lectures delivered in English. This condition will require a higher TOEFL-like test score, for example a minimum TOEFL-like test of 500 or advanced level. With TOEFL-like test of at least 500, students are expected to be able to communicate, both orally and in writing.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the above description it can be concluded that (1) the majority of students FT Unsri Campus Indralaya academic year 2010/2011 in general have problem to achieve the minimum TOEFL-like test score required by FT Unsri at the end of their studies if they only learn English courses based on the curriculum offered by their majors or not learn English at all during their formal learning, (2) the problem of student mastery of English language FT Unsri Campus

Indralaya academic year 2010/2011 can be overcome if they learn English through a variety of English courses during their study at the FT Unsri, and (3) minimum TOEFL like test score required by the FT Unsri currently need to be reconsidered to fit with the demand of Sriwijaya University as a world class university.

Thus, it is suggested that (1) FT student Unsri Campus Indralaya academic year 2010/2011 improve their English mastery through English classes based on the curriculum and through the English language courses from the beginning of their studies so that the achievement of the minimum TOEFL Test-like score required by the FT Unsri will not be an obstacle at the end of their studies, and (2) FT Unsri expected to increase the minimum TOEFL-like test score to fit the demands of Sriwijaya University as a world class university in the future.

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