



**INVESTIGATING THE DIFFICULTIES FACED BY ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
STUDENTS IN STRUCTURE AND WRITTEN EXPRESSION SECTION OF TOEFL
AT BUNG HATTA UNIVERSITY**

Indah Etika

indah.beautyethic@gmail.com

State University of Padang

Abstract

TOEFL has been regulated as one of the graduation requirements at Bung Hatta University with a minimum score of 400 for all majors, including the English Department. However, there are students still failed in achieving the targeted score. The preliminary research showed that English Department students at Bung Hatta University had difficulties in TOEFL, especially the Structure and Written Expression section. Thus, this research aimed to investigate the difficulties faced by students viewed from material and personal factors. Descriptive research was applied as the research method where the sixth-semester students of English Department were chosen as the subject of the research. There were three instruments used in collecting the data of this research which were the researcher as the instrument; the test of Structure and Written Expression section of TOEFL aimed at identifying the students' ability in the test and collecting the data about the materials faced difficult; interview guide to investigate the factors causing them difficult in the test. Then, the result showed that the ability of English Department students in Structure and Written Expression section of TOEFL was 41% in level C, "Moderate." It proved that the Structure and Written Expression section of TOEFL was the most difficult section to answer two other sections (Listening and Reading Comprehension) faced by English Department students at Bung Hatta University. Among the eight indicators of materials tested in the Structure section of TOEFL, *Inversion* became the most difficult one to answer. The percentage of difficulty for this material was 85,19%. Thus, in finding the factors causing them difficult, seven indicators were interviewed to the subject of the research. Then, Material Comprehension was the most dominant factor causing the students difficult in the test.

Keywords: *Difficulty, Structure and Written Expression Section, and TOEFL*

I. Introduction

TOEFL, which stands for Test of English as a Foreign Language, is a standardized test recognized worldwide. This test is used to measure the ability to understand English, to recognize selected

structural and grammatical points in standard written English, and to read short passages as those used in North American colleges and universities. TOEFL is also used as English language proficiency for

non-native English language speakers such as Indonesian students wishing to enroll in the United States universities. Many English-speaking academic and professional institutions accept this test. TOEFL is a trademark of ETS (Educational Testing Service) which designs and administers the tests (Wei and Cook, 2009).

Sullivan, et al. (2011:2) mention that TOEFL is available in three forms, namely CBT (Computer Based Test), PBT (Paper Based Test), and iBT (Internet Based Test) TOEFL. Among those three forms of TOEFL, the PBT is offered in most countries, especially in Asia. Besides the lowest cost among them, PBT is more accessible than two other tests. Therefore, many universities and institutions in Indonesia require PBT as one of the requirements used rather than CBT and iBT.

TOEFL has been one of the English proficiency tests used by Indonesian students for specific purposes. Mostly, they take TOEFL for educational programs, not only for entering university but also for a graduation requirement, and future career such as for applying for a job. Because of these needs, those students need to learn and prepare themselves to have a high TOEFL score for fulfilling the requirements asked.

Bung Hatta University requires the students to have the TOEFL certificate as their comprehension test requirement before graduation with the same standard of the score (400) both for English Department students and other majors. This requirement is based on the regulation which has been admitted under the rector circular of graduation requirement No. 4938/UM-1/KP/VII- 2013.

As the preliminary research on January 12th – 13th 2015 at PPBA (*Pusat Pendidikan Bahasa Asing*) Bung Hatta University, the score of English Department students who took TOEFL for graduation in April 2015 showed that there still 6 of 39 students (20,51%) failed to get the score 400 as comprehension test requirement. Thus, those six students took the test twice to get the minimum score. Then, if the score of each section (Listening Comprehension, Structure and Written Expression, and Reading Comprehension) was analyzed, it was gotten that the achievement of English Department students at Bung Hatta University in TOEFL who graduated in April 2015 was 39,00% in Listening; 29,30% in Structure and Written Expression; and 31,70% in Reading Comprehension test. This percentage proved that the lowest score gotten by those students was in the Structure and Written Expression section

test, meaning, this section was being the most difficult test among those two other sections.

Despite being an English Department student, it did not guarantee that the score required could be achieved easily. As shown on the preliminary research data, there are still English Department students failing to achieve the required score for a graduation requirement, 400. Furthermore, it also shows that the students have difficulty passing TOEFL specified to the Structure and Written Expression section. Cowie (2015) defines the term “difficult” as a thing that is hard to accomplish, deal with, or understand. Then, the Structure and Written Expression section in the TOEFL is said as a difficult test to comprehend if the students cannot accomplish, deal with, and understand materials that are proved from their achievement of score target. Henceforth, the factors that make these problems happen are viewed from two major factors, the materials tested and students' personal.

Several matters caused the students to face the difficulties in materials tested in TOEFL. First, the students did not have specific TOEFL subjects in the classroom served in the curriculum. Materials given in the classroom tended to be general while in TOEFL, many specific testing points should be taught intensively to the students.

Meanwhile, the university still required the students to have a TOEFL certificate with a particular score. Furthermore, because there were many testing points in TOEFL questions, it might be hard for them to memorize or understand them all.

On the other side, viewed from personal factors, the students might also find it difficult to pass TOEFL with a minimum score required. As the sample, the students' situation and condition at the time, taking the test played an essential factor. Besides, less practice was also the major problem causing the difficulties in which the students might not be familiar with TOEFL, whether it was about the questions tested, the form in answering the questions, the strategy in choosing the correct answer, or the time-limited. Amir (2009) agrees that the difficulty mostly faced by the students in TOEFL deals with the allocated time. Thereupon, having familiarity, knowledge, and practice about TOEFL will save students time by giving them specific strategies for answering such questions and managing the time.

Regarding those students' difficulties, this research related to TOEFL was necessary to conduct to anticipate further failure and overcome the difficulties faced by the students in achieving the score target. Hence, this research aimed at investigating the difficulties faced by English

Department students in Structure and Written Expression section of TOEFL at Bung Hatta University viewed from material and personal factors.

II. Review of Related Literature

2.1. Structure and Written Expression

Materials in TOEFL

Structure and Written Expression section is the second section tested in TOEFL. According to the Educational Testing Service (ETS, 2014), this section contains two types. The first type is Structure, where the students are asked to complete the sentence for questions number one through fifteen, and the second is Written Expression to identify error answer for questions number sixteen through forty.

According to Cowie (2015), structure is defined as the arrangement and relations between the parts and elements of something complex. It means that the words or phrases are arranged together in some way following the appropriate organization. Besides, Sharpe (1997:143) explains that written expression is the manner or form in which a thing is expressed in words, wording, or phrasing. Hence, Structure and Written Expression can be defined as the elements or parts which need the organization of the words,

phrases, or clauses to make them well-arranged.

The Structure and Written Expression section in TOEFL contains sentences that test the test takers' knowledge of essential structural and grammatical elements of standard written English. Because TOEFL is a trademark of ETS in Princeton, New Jersey, Pyle and Munoz (2009:4) mention that the topics on this test are various engaging with the United States or Canadian history, culture, art, or literature, thus, it will not give any particular advantage to an individual in any specific field of study. Also, Pyle and Munoz (2009:7) argue that eighty percent of the questions can be solved by analyzing a sentence structure without consulting its meaning. However, twenty percent of them cannot be solved without understanding their meanings. Thus, the test takers' somehow may also need to have prior knowledge of these contexts to help them answer the structural or grammatical points being tested.

Riyanto (2008:83) mentions that the ability tested in the Structure and Written Expression section of TOEFL is testing the test takers' ability to recognize formal written English. Many sentences are acceptable in spoken English, but not acceptable in formal written English. This written language is said as a formal

language because formal vocabularies are used, contractions are not allowed, and slang words are prohibited. On the other side, ordinary and familiar vocabularies, contractions, include slang words, are more accepted in spoken language. Thus, the test-takers need to know the correct structure and written language well that an error will be immediately identified.

This second section in TOEFL is said as difficult material because many components need to comprehend in this section. Cohen (2007) argues that the test takers need to understand a complex alphabetic system, which asks them to struggle hard to gain what the sentence brings to them. This complex system contained in the Structure and Written Expression section makes the test takers find it a difficult test.

Gandi (2014:99) argues that the questions in this section often focus on small points of the language. It means that the test takers need to focus more on the detail of the testing points. Moreover, this section becomes harder because, besides analyzing the structure of the sentences or clauses, they somehow also need to anticipate the correct meaning of the questions. It means that the test takers need extra understanding to answer them. Thus, there are various materials tested in the questions of Structure and Written

Expression section in TOEFL. Those materials are tested in eight significant points. They are 1) Basic Grammar Terminologies; 2) Basic Sentence Patterns; 3) Comparisons; 4) Inversion; 5) Expressions of Quantity; 6) Conjunctions; 7) Unnecessary Words; 8) Clauses and Phrases.

First, the materials questioned at most in TOEFL are Basic Grammar Terminologies. Baker (2012) names Basic Grammar Terminologies as Parts of Speech. He mentions that in traditional grammar, they are divided into seven parts of speech for English, namely nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, articles, and prepositions. Grammars often define these categories according to the meanings of the words they contain. A noun names a thing; a pronoun places a noun; a verb describes an action; adjectives modifies or limits the meaning of a noun; adverbs modify adjectives, verbs or other adverbs; article modifies a noun, adjective-noun, or adverb-adjective- noun; and a preposition usually functions as adverb or adjective. Because of many materials contained in this topic, a better way to define a part of speech is by its morphology, the way its form can change (suffixes), or by its syntax, which governs its relationship to other words in the sentence.

The heart of every English sentence is the subject and verb relationship, as quoted from Tang (2015). Other elements can be added to make a sentence more interesting, but they are not essential to its formation. Tang divides sentence patterns into five basic patterns around which most English sentences are built namely 1) Subject + Verb; 2) Subject + Verb + Object; 3) Subject + Verb + Adjective; 4) Subject + Verb + Adverb; and 5) Subject + Verb + Noun. The basic form of a sentence is subject and verb only, but somehow modifiers are needed to be used as additional information. Hence, this basic sentence pattern is commonly named of subject and verb agreement in which these patterns play important roles in spoken and written language to deliver the information or thoughts meaningfully in correct grammatical form.

The third material tested in TOEFL is about clauses and phrases. Phillips (2001) and Sullivan et al. (2011) clarify the differences between phrases and clauses. Both phrases and clauses are fundamental components of writing sentences. Understanding the difference between the two is vital in grammatically correct and properly constructed sentences. A phrase is a group of two or more words that do not have the subject and verb combination.

Meanwhile, a clause is a group of words that can act as a sentence but is not necessarily a complete sentence on its own. Jatmiko (2014:69) explains the difference between independent and dependent clauses. If the clause could stand by itself, and form a complete sentence, it is called an independent clause. Meanwhile, dependent clauses have a subject doing a verb, but they have subordinate conjunction placed in front of the clause. That subordinate conjunction means that the clause cannot stand independently by itself and become a complete sentence. Then, phrases and clauses are classified into six types namely; 1) Adjective Clause – Adjective Phrase, 2) Participial Phrases (Present/Past Participle); 3) Noun Clause – Noun Phrase; 4) Verb Phrase (Verb+Preposition); 5) Adverb Clause – Adverb Phrase; and 6) Prepositional Phrase. Each of them has its functions and patterns.

The fourth material tested in TOEFL is comparisons. The function of comparisons is to compare one thing to another thing comparing their adjective. Baker (2012) classifies comparisons into five types, namely positive degree, comparative degree, superlative degree, double comparatives, and repetition in comparison. Baker defines Positive Degree as the base form of an adjective. Commonly it uses the pattern *as* adjective *as* to show that the

persons, things, or events being compared have the same adjective. Comparative Degree compares one person or thing with another, and it is used to say whether a person or thing has more or less of a particular quality. Superlative Degree describes one person or thing as having more of a quality than all other people or things in a group. If a person or thing gains more of a particular quality and causes a parallel increase of another quality, the comparative adjective can be repeated called Double Comparatives. Then, if a word or phrase is repeated in case of comparing two things, that words can be replaced by “that” for singular noun and “those” for plural noun called Repetition in Comparison.

Lesnov (2011) emphasizes using the next material in TOEFL that is inversion. He defines inversion, in general, as a changed order of things. When looking at the English language grammar, inversion is in the standard order of the subject and the verb in a sentence. The English language often uses this kind of inversion to make a question, but this is not the only time that the standard order of the subject and verb in a sentence is inverted.

Then, the next material that occurs in TOEFL is Expressions of Quantity. Riyanto (2008:252) describes that the expression of quantity tells the amount of

something. A countable and uncountable noun follows these expressions. Some nouns can be both countable and uncountable, depending on how they are used, and some nouns are commonly confused.

Riyanto also defines conjunctions in his strategy to prepare TOEFL’s book. Conjunctions are words that are used to connect words or a group of words or clauses (Riyanto, 2008:176). This material may consist of two main parts, which are parallel constructions and paired conjunctions. When information in a sentence is given in the form of a list or series, all components must be grammatically parallel or equal (Pyle and Munoz, 2009:167). This definition is called parallel constructions. There may be only two components, or there may be many components in a list. However, if the first is, for example, an adjective, the rest must also be adjectives. Parallel construction means the same structure before and after certain conjunctions such as *and*, *but*, and *or*. Those conjunctions have the function, for example; *and* is used to show addition; *but* to show contrast; and *or* to indicate alternative. Also, a comma is usually used to separate those words or phrases. Meanwhile, paired conjunctions are the conjunction that should be paired in appropriate expressions such as *either...or*;

neither...nor; both...and; not...but; not only/not just...but also; whether...or; between...and. Pyle and Munoz (2009:142) name this material by inclusive. Those expressions are like entities in which they must be used together, for example, a noun with a noun, adjective with an adjective, adverb with an adverb, prepositional phrase with a prepositional phrase, and verb with a verb.

The last material tested in the standard TOEFL test is an unnecessary word. Unnecessary words, according to Sullivan et al. (2011:76), are words that sometimes should not be in a sentence, but added to the sentence. This unnecessary word might result in a double subject, a double negative, a repeated similar adjective or adverb, or an unnecessary preposition.

The test of Structure and Written Expression section in the TOEFL tests the test takers' ability toward English and tests the general knowledge where English is used as a medium to deliver it. Thus, the eight significant materials as mentioned above were used as the indicators in the test of Structure and Written Expression section in TOEFL namely 1) Basic Grammar Terminologies; 2) Basic Sentence Patterns; 3) Comparisons; 4) Inversion; 5) Expressions of Quantity; 6) Conjunctions; 7) Unnecessary Words, and 8) Clauses and Phrases.

In the Structure and Written Expression section of TOEFL, the students face difficulties because of several factors. DeKeyser (2003) defines that the factors of the difficulties faced by the students in structure test are distinguished in two terms, namely, object difficulty and subject difficulty. He argues that objective difficulty concerns the linguistic factors that contribute to the learning difficulty of the structures. These factors include, for example, the complexity of the structure itself, its meaning, and its scope. It can be said that this object difficulty deals with the material factor of structure test where the students may face in structure test as well as Structure and Written Expression section of TOEFL. Meantime, subjective difficulty, according to DeKeyser (2003), is "the ratio of the rule's inherent linguistic complexity to the student's ability to handle such a rule." It might mean that it considers individual learner differences. The difficulties faced by the students in the structure test may occur because of their personal factors.

Following the previous source, Rico (2014) also argues that grammatical structure difficulty faced by English Foreign Language students is caused by two factors, namely external and internal factors. External factors are related to a particular language learning situation.

These factors are composed of curriculum, culture, and status. Then, internal factors are those that a language learner brings with him or her to a particular learning situation. Rico (2014) mentions that these factors are composed of age, personality, motivation, experiences, cognition, and native language.

Based on those two sources, DeKeyser (2003) and Rico (2014) agree that the difficulties the English Foreign Language students face in grammatical structure tests are caused by two factors; objective/external factors and subjective/internal factors. Under those circumstances, this research took those two factors causing the difficulties faced by the students in structure test, especially in Structure and Written Expression section of TOEFL, viewed from an objective/external difficulty factors, and subjective/internal difficulty factors as the consideration to be investigated. The objective / external difficulty is specified into material factor and the subjective/internal difficulty to student's personal factor.

2.2. Difficulties Dealing with Materials in Structure and Written Expression Section of TOEFL

Cowie (2015) defines the term "difficult" as a thing that is hard to accomplish, deal with, or understand. Then,

the Structure and Written Expression section in the TOEFL is said as a difficult test to comprehend if the students cannot accomplish, deal with, and understand materials that are proved from their achievement of score target. Harmaini, a head of PPBA (*Pusat Pendidikan Bahasa Asing*) at Bung Hatta University, added that there were also students, English Department students, who took TOEFL several times to achieve the score required, 400. Due to many points tested in the Structure and Written Expression section of TOEFL, this section becomes difficult materials to comprehend. Although English Department students did this test, it did not guarantee that the students could get a high score or even it was difficult for the students to achieve the score required by the university as one of the comprehension test requirements for graduation.

As mentioned above, there are eight major testing points questioned in the Structure and Written Expression section of TOEFL. Each of those points has its portion and difficulty in TOEFL as below. Gear (1996) mentions that the difficulties mostly found in Basic Grammar Terminologies are in differentiating the suffixes for Noun, Adjective, Verb, and Adverb, and the pattern of each term. Therefore, the students need to understand how to

manipulate words to create a correct grammatical form.

A sentence can be divided into five patterns named Basic Sentence Patterns. Pardiyono (2005:57) mentions that Basic Sentence Pattern is the elements of a sentence that have a function as subject, predicate, object, complement, or adverb. This material is about the Subject and Verb Agreement. Kelly (2010) adds that this material deals with the concordance subject with the verb seen from the tense, singularity or plurality, and active and passive form. The difficulties found in this point are organizing the use of verbs, whether it is a transitive verb, intransitive verb, or phrasal verb. Besides, memorizing the difference of verb forms referring to the tense is almost always being the problem for some students.

Kies (2015) explains that the difficulties mostly found in materials about clauses and phrases are the way of reducing the clauses into phrases. Some students failed in differentiating adjective phrase from verb both in active and passive forms. Furthermore, they often made mistakes in determining the subject or object of the preposition (prepositional phrase). Furthermore, many questions occur relating to these materials, which then the students might be confused about analyzing them.

Star (2015) describes that students sometimes have difficulties with comparison materials. First, students may make a mistake in comparing the items where they should be similar. Second, students use a different pattern on both sides of the comparison. This problem might make the comparison imbalanced. Last, the students might make a double comparison. It means that the word ending in *-er* or *-est* and specific irregular comparisons do not need to be modified with the word *more*, *most*, *less*, or *least* since they are already comparative superlative.

The difficulties that students mostly found in inversion, as researched by Lesnov (2011) is that the students sometimes fail to answer the questions about inversion in negative form. When the phrase containing the negation (*not*, *no*, *never*, and *nothing*) and a word that implies negation (*only*, *hardly*, *scarcely*) appears in the position to the right of the verb, standard subject auxiliary word order obtains. If the fronted phrase containing the negation does not occur, the sentence is terrible. Thus, it is reasonable if the students seem difficult to determine which auxiliaries should be used in the correct form. To make the correct form, the use of auxiliary should also be appropriate with the tense use to express them. Meaning, the

students must pay much consideration in determining the tense and correct auxiliary used.

The expression of quantity also has its difficulties. Reinalda (2009) argues that the students still find it hard to differentiate countable nouns from uncountable nouns and the expressions preceding them. Besides, several expressions have different rules in determining an appropriate noun.

Students might also find difficulties with conjunctions. Pyle and Munoz (2009:166) mention that in TOEFL, a conjunction is one of the materials that appear at most where this type of error may also be categorized as word form. The questions mostly occur in the second part of the Written Expression section. The students might not concern with this material because they somehow avoid checking the smaller point. This material asks the students to give all components in the form of a list or series in grammatically parallel or equal. The components might not occur jointly one to another. Somehow, it occurs after several words or phrases. Thus, Sullivan et al. (2011:66) suggest that the students read the entire question sentence, not just the answer choices. Most answer choices are correct by themselves and incorrect only when they are used in a particular sentence.

Though omitted word category, a necessary word is left out of a sentence, is a severe category, an unnecessary word also has its difficulty. A word that should not be in a sentence is added to the sentence may also be confusing for some students. Sullivan et al. (2011:76) suggest that the students read the whole sentence to see if one of the words sounds strange but seems correct. If the students think a word is double, choose the underlined words next to or in the double words.

Because each of the materials tested in TOEFL has its difficulty, the students need to know the strategies in comprehending them. Priyonggo and Fanani (2005:10) propose the strategies to anticipate the difficulties that students face in the Structure and Written Expression section of TOEFL. First, the students need to have the previous diagnostic in what material is challenging to answer. Then, they need to concentrate more on that material. Second, the students have to know what makes their answer incorrect and find the correct answer and the reason why. Last, it is necessary to have lots of practice with the test to make the students more natural to understand the grammatical rules.

Consequently, it is suggested that the students need to have a strong English basic structure before having the test; practice a lot; get familiar with the test form; manage

the time, and prepare all well. Then, when in the test, it might not be necessary to understand the meanings of all words in the sentence to find the correct answer or to identify the error. Hence, the students are suggested to read through the sentence quickly to see if they find the correct answer (questions number one through fifteen) or recognize an error (questions number sixteen through forty).

2.3. Difficulties in TOEFL Dealing with the Students' Personal Factor

The term "difficulty", as defined by Cowie (2015), has other definitions which are 1) the state or condition of being difficult; 2) a thing that is hard to accomplish, deal with, or understand; and 3) a situation that is difficult or dangerous. Through these definitions, they suit the difficulties faced by the students based on their personal factors in TOEFL specified to Structure and Written Expression section. Students may find TOEFL as something difficult due to the situation or condition when preparing and doing the test.

Concerning TOEFL, Mayuasti (2011) researched that Structure and Written Expression section is the most challenging test rather than two other tests. In this section, besides reading the English text as a foreign language for Indonesian students, the students also have to analyze phrases, clauses, or sentences to correct them.

Therefore, it is common if the students spend much time in this section. While relating to this section, the Structure part (questions number one through fifteen) is more complicated than the Written Expression part (questions number sixteen through forty). It is because it is easy to find a mistake instead of completing a missing part of a sentence (extraordinarily complex and compound sentences and their types). Within the Structure, students encounter long sentences (complex and compound) that take time to read and choose the correct choice. It also requires them to consider the time specified to Structure and Written Expression (25 minutes only). They have to answer 15 questions of Structure and 25 questions of Written Expression within that limited time.

Most of the grammatical rules used in Structure are also used in Written Expression, but students may find Written Expression questions much more relaxed than Structure, though the number of questions of this type is more than those of Structure. Therefore, students will also face a problem with time. Amir (2009) agrees that the problem mostly faced by the students in TOEFL deals with the allocated time. Thereupon, having familiarity, knowledge, and practice about TOEFL will save students' time by giving them specific

strategies of how to answer such questions and how to manage the time as well.

Since this research aims to analyze the difficulties faced by English Department students at Bung Hatta University in TOEFL specified to Structure and Written Expression section, the theories from Al-Rawashdeh (2009) and Abboud (2011) theory were combined to indicate the factors causing the difficulties faced by the students in Structure test. Those factors are 1) familiarity with the test, 2) motivation, 3) anxiety, 4) strategies in answering the questions, 5) time management, 6) situational conditions of the students, and 7) material comprehension. Those factors were used as the indicators and developed to be the guideline in investigating the difficulties faced by the students in TOEFL specified to Structure and Written Expression section.

III. Research Method

The *descriptive research* was used as the research method to investigate the difficulties faced by English Department students at Bung Hatta University in Structure and Written Expression section of TOEFL. It is said as descriptive research because it involves a natural setting and fundamentally interpretive. Gay and Airasian (2000:275) mention that this kind of research involves collecting the data to

answer the questions concerning the current status of the object researched. Therefore, the descriptive research determines and reports the way things are.

This research was conducted in the sixth semester of English Department students at Bung Hatta University registered in the academic year 2012/2013. These students were chosen because they had taken courses in all language skills (Reading, Structure, and Listening subjects). All of the students were considered having the same characteristic since they took the same courses taught in the classrooms.

In collecting the data, there were three instruments used in this research which were; 1) the researcher itself as the instrument; 2) a standardized test of Paper Based Test (PBT) TOEFL specified to Structure and Written Expression section which aimed at identifying the students' ability in the test and collecting the data about the materials found difficult; 3) and semi-structured questions of the interview guide to investigate the factors causing the students difficult in the test in-depth in an informal situation. The theories from Al-Rawashdeh (2009) and Abboud (2011) were combined to indicate the factors causing the difficulties faced by the students in Structure test. Those factors are 1) familiarity with the test, 2) motivation,

3) anxiety, 4) strategies in answering the questions, 5) time management, 6) situational conditions of the students, and 7) material comprehension. Those factors were used as the indicators and developed to be the guideline in investigating the difficulties faced by the students in TOEFL specified to Structure and Written Expression section.

There were several steps in collecting the data in this research. The first data were obtained from TOEFL given to English Department students at Bung Hatta University. This Structure and Written Expression section of TOEFL was conducted twice to make data reliable and to know their TOEFL's ability and find out which materials were difficult faced by the students at the test. The test given was served in 40 questions of multiple-choice form with allocated time 25 minutes. The procedures in collecting the data were; first, the researcher explained to the subjects what they should do during the test, whether it was about the way to fill the data, the answer sheet, or the instruction in each section. Then, the test books were distributed to the students. While doing the test, the researcher herself supervised and observed the students. After finishing the test, those students' answer sheets were collected then analyzed to find out their ability in TOEFL and to get the percentage

and the degree of difficult materials of each indicator in Structure and Written Expression section of TOEFL faced by the students. Then the data were analyzed to adjust between the first and the second data about the difficult materials faced by the students in the materials of Structure and Written Expression section of TOEFL.

The following data of this research were gathered by interviewing the subject of the research. The procedures in collecting the data by using this interview guide were that the students were interviewed after finishing the Structure and Written Expression section of TOEFL. They were then investigated using prepared and validated interview guides about the difficulties they faced in TOEFL and the difficulties specified to Structure and Written Expression materials. Besides, the audio recorder on hand-phone was used to record students' answers, which then their answers were transcribed to make it easier in analyzing the information of factors causing the difficulties faced by the students in the test as the data gotten from this instrument.

After the data were collected, then they were analyzed in the following steps. These were the steps in analyzing the data gathered from TOEFL: 1) the researcher checked the students' answer sheets of TOEFL by using the answer keys provided

by the TOEFL practice test book administered by ETS (Educational Testing Service). The converted score ranges were used and also to find out whether the students could achieve the score target or did not, as the comprehension test requirement for graduation. Moreover, this score also showed which section was mostly tricky faced by the students among those three sections; Listening, Structure and Written Expression, and Reading Comprehension; 2) after knowing the students' scores, this research focused on students' answers in Structure and Written Expression section test. From the scores, the students' ability to comprehend the structure materials of TOEFL was seen from the formula suggested by Arikunto (2010) as follows:

- $\geq \text{Mean} + 1.5 \text{ SD}$
- $\geq \text{Mean} + 0.5 \text{ SD}$ until $\leq \text{Mean} + 1.5 \text{ SD}$
- $\geq \text{Mean} - 0.5 \text{ SD}$ until $\leq \text{Mean} + 0.5 \text{ SD}$
- $\geq \text{Mean} - 1.5 \text{ SD}$ until $\leq \text{Mean} - 0.5 \text{ SD}$
- $\leq \text{Mean} - 1.5 \text{ SD}$

The formula above was used to know how many students got A, B, C, D, or E in which then it was reported by using percentage. The aim of using this formula was to see how well the students in Structure and Expressions section test were; 3) the students' answers were grouped based on the indicators of the materials tested in TOEFL. It functioned to

see which materials were delicately faced by the students in the Structure and Written Expression section of TOEFL proved by how many students were incorrect in answering the questions. 4) The organized data were interpreted into general conclusions or understandings; 5) after interpreting the test score finally, the researcher explained what difficult materials were found in Structure and Written Expression section of TOEFL faced by the students and why they were difficult. Theories from experts supported the explanation about its difficulty.

Meanwhile, the transcripts about students' difficulties in TOEFL were analyzed by using techniques suggested by Miles & Huberman (1994:21); 1) *Data Reduction*: the mass data that appeared in the transcripts of the interview were reduced, selected and simplified to get the data needed to answer the research question. There were seven indicators asked in 33 questions to 18 students as the interviewees. Each of the students' answers was grouped in each question. Since there were 18 interviewees in this research, the researcher selected and decided appropriately which students' answers were to be singled out for description to support the information about the students' difficulties in TOEFL. Then, the organized and compressed of information were

provided; 2) *Data Display*: the reduced data were showed up in words and diagrammatic forms to see the interrelationship and make the data much clear and more comfortable to read and to understand as the findings of the research; 3) *Conclusion Drawing and Verification*: the organized data were stepped back to consider what they meant. Furthermore, the data were also revised as many times as necessary to cross-check or verifies the conclusions.

IV. Findings and Discussion

The findings of this research answer the four research questions. Each of the findings is discussed in detail as follows:

4.1. The ability of English Department Students at Bung Hatta University in Structure and Written Expression Section of TOEFL

After checking the students' answer sheets, it was found that the students had different abilities in acquiring TOEFL. Among 27 students joining the test, ten students still failed to achieve the score target (400) as one of the graduation requirements regulated by the university. Meaning, there was 37,04% of the students got the score lower than 400 showing that their ability in TOEFL was at a moderate level. Furthermore, it also shows that the Structure and Written

Expression section of TOEFL was the most difficult section the students faced among two other sections (Listening Comprehension and Reading Comprehension).

The following is the table showing the students' ability in the Structure and Written Expression section of TOEFL by using the formula proposed by Arikunto (2010).

Table 1. The ability of Students in Structure and Written Expression Section of TOEFL

SCORE	NUMBER OF STUDENTS	%
A (Very Good)	0	0%
B (Good)	10	37%
C (Moderate)	11	41%
D (Low)	1	4%
E (Unsatisfactory)	5	19%

The table above shows that 0% of the students were in level A, meaning no one had a "Very Good" score in Structure and Written Expression section of TOEFL. There were ten students in level B, "Good", which was about 37%. On the other hand, most of the students were at the level of C, "Moderate", about 41% or 11 students among 27. Only one student got level D, "Low", which was about 4%. Then the last, five students were in level E, "Unsatisfactory", or 19%. It indicated that the students have to

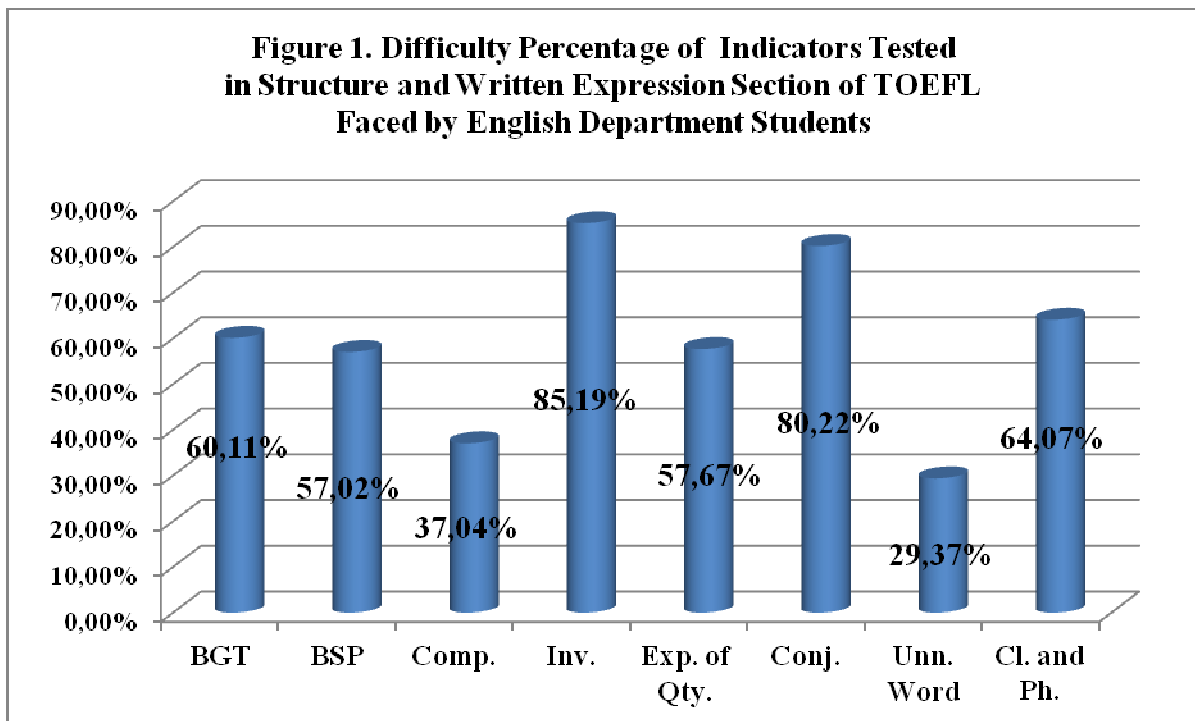
improve their ability in the Structure and Written Expression section of TOEFL. Furthermore, it also proved the preliminary research that English Department students at Bung Hatta University had difficulties in Structure and Written Expression section of TOEFL.

4.2 Difficult Materials in Structure and Written Expression Section of TOEFL Faced by English Department Students at Bung Hatta University

There are eight indicators tested in Structure and Written Expression section of TOEFL, they are:

- 1) Basic Grammar Terminologies;
- 2) Basic Sentence Patterns;
- 3) Comparisons;
- 4) Inversions;
- 5) Conjunctions;
- 6) Expressions of Quantity;
- 7) Unnecessary Words; and
- 8) Clauses and Phrases

Among those eight indicators, the following was the figure showing the percentage of difficult indicators faced by English Department students at Bung Hatta University based on the score of the students' answers.



As seen in the figure above, it was found that Inversion was the most difficult indicator of all. In other words,

Inversion was 85,19% difficult faced by English Department students at Bung Hatta University. Then, it was followed

by Conjunctions as the second difficult indicator in which the percentage was 80,22%. The third difficult indicator was Clauses and Phrases about 64,07%. Basic Grammar Terminology was placed on the fourth about 60,11%. Expressions of Quantity was in the next difficult indicator of about 57,67%. Next, the Basic Sentence Patterns indicator was ranked in number six, about 57,02%. Comparisons indicator, 37,04%, was the problematic indicator placed on number seven, and the last was Unnecessary Words, 29,37%.

4.3 Reasons Why the Materials Faced by English Department Students at Bung Hatta University are Difficult

This point explains why each of the materials tested in the Structure and Written Expression section of TOEFL based on those eight indicators is difficult faced by the students. The explanation is arranged from the most difficult indicator to the less difficult one.

a. Inversion

In the first structure test, Inversion occurred only in one question. Among 27 students joining the test, only eight students were circling the correct answer. It shows that this material was challenging for the students. The percentage of difficult material for this

indicator was 70,37%. In the second test, Inversion occurred in one question too. Among 21 students taking the second test, none of them answered it correctly. Thus, the percentage of the problematic material for this question was 100%.

Summing up both of the tests, it was gotten that the difficulty percentage for this indicator was 85,19%. Thus, it made Inversion become the first degree of the problematic materials in the Structure and Written Expression section of TOEFL.

In Inversion material, if the question is begun with negative adverbial form (e.g., *seldom*), it must be followed by auxiliary/modal/to be + subject + verb. This material is not taught in the classroom, but it is tested in TOEFL. Hence, it is understandable if almost all of the students never heard about Inversion. That was the reason why all of them answered this question wrong.

This finding is following the research by Lesnov (2011), who argued that the students might find the difficulties in answering the questions about Inversion in negative form. They sometimes fail in determining which auxiliaries should be used in the correct form. It happens because the use of auxiliary in negative inversion

depends on the tense used to express them. Hence, this material becomes more complicated for students.

b. Conjunctions

This indicator contains the materials of Parallel Constructions and Paired Conjunctions. In the first test, it only occurred in one question. Among 27 students who took the test, only four students answered it correctly. Thus, the difficulty percentage of this indicator was 85,19%. In the next test, questions about the Conjunctions occurred in 3 numbers. The percentage of difficulty for this indicator was 75,24%.

Thus, if calculated, the difficulty percentage of Conjunctions indicator at both tests was 80,22%. It made this indicator was placed in number two on the degree of difficult material in the Structure and Written Expression section of TOEFL.

According to Pyle and Munoz (2009:166), the students fail to choose the correct answer in Conjunctions material because they do not concern with this material, even they somehow avoid checking the smaller point. This material asks the students to give all components in the form of a list or series in grammatically parallel or equal. The components might not

occur jointly one to another. Somehow, it occurs after several words or phrases. Moreover, Sullivan et al. (2011:66) suggest that the students read the entire question sentence, not just the answer choices. Most answer choices are correct by themselves and incorrect only when they are used in a particular sentence.

c. Clauses and Phrases

This indicator contains six materials: Adjective Clause-Adjective Phrase, Participial Phrase, Noun Clause-Noun Phrase, Verb Phrase, Adverb Clause-Adverb Phrase, and Prepositional Phrase. For the first test, Clauses and Phrases occurred in 16 questions. There, some students found this indicator as a problematic material to comprehend. The percentage of difficult material for this indicator was 59,48%. Meanwhile, in the second test, questions about this indicator occurred in 15 questions. The difficulty percentage of this indicator was 68,65%.

Summing up both difficulty percentages of Test 1 and Test 2, the difficulty percentage of this indicator was 64,07%. Thus, Clauses and Phrases indicator was placed in number three in the degree of difficult

materials in the Structure and Written Expression section.

Kies (2015) explains that the difficulties mostly found in materials about Clauses and Phrases are the way of reducing the clauses into phrases. Some students failed in differentiating adjective phrase from verb both in active and passive forms. Besides, they often made mistakes in determining the subject or object of a preposition (prepositional phrase). Furthermore, many questions occur relating to these materials, which then the students must take time in analyzing them.

d. Basic Grammar Terminology

Basic Grammar Terminologies (BGT) consist of 7 materials, which are Noun, Pronoun, Adjective, Verb, Adverb, Article, and Preposition. In the first test, these materials occurred in 13 questions. It was found that 52,12% of the students failed to choose the correct answers. In the second test, there were six questions about BGT. The percentage of the problematic question was 68,09%.

Combining those two Structure tests where Test 1 = 52,12% and Test 2 = 68,09%, it was gotten that the average difficulty percentage of BGT was 60,11%. Thus, it was placed in number

four in the degree of difficult materials among eight indicators tested.

Gear (1996) mentions that the difficulties mostly found in Basic Grammar Terminologies are in differentiating and determining which one is Noun, Adjective, Verb, or Adverb, and the roles of each pattern. Therefore, the students need to understand how to manipulate words to create a correct grammatical form.

e. Expressions of Quantity

The expression of quantity indicator deals with a countable noun and uncountable noun. This indicator, in the first TOEFL structure test, occurred in 3 questions where the difficulty percentage of this indicator was 62,96%. In the second test, this indicator also occurred in 3 questions, with the difficulty percentage 52,38%. Calculating them all, the difficulty percentage for this indicator was 57,67%. Then it was placed on number five on the degree of difficult material.

The difficulty faced by the students in this indicator has been agreed by the Reinalda (2009) who argues that the students find it hard to differentiate countable nouns from uncountable nouns and the expressions preceding them. There are several expressions which have different rules in

determining an appropriate noun as the examples of the question above.

f. Basic Sentence Patterns

Basic Sentence Patterns deals with the subject and verb agreement. This indicator, in the first test, occurred in 2 questions where the degree of difficult material for this indicator was around 42,60%. Meanwhile, in the second test, only one question belongs to indicator Basic Sentence Patterns. In this question, there were 15 students of 21 chose the wrong answer, or it could be said that the percentage of difficult material for this question was 71,43%.

The percentage of difficulty on Basic Sentence Patterns indicator seen from the calculation of both Test 1 and Test 2 was 57,02%. It made this indicator was placed in number six for the degree of difficult materials tested.

Kelly (2010) adds that the difficulties found in this point are organizing the use of verbs, whether it is a transitive verb and intransitive verb, active and passive verbs, singular and plural verbs, or phrasal verb. Besides, memorizing the difference of verb forms referring to the tense is almost always being the problem for some students.

g. Comparisons

Comparisons in this test indicator consist of five materials, namely Positive Degree, Comparative Degree, Superlative Degree, Double Comparatives, and Repetition in Comparison. In the first test, material comparison occurred only in one number. Among 27 students joining the test, there were still 11 students answering this question wrong. The percentage of difficult material for this question was 40,74%.

In the second test, material about comparisons occurred in 3 questions. Thus, calculating those three questions, the degree of delicate materials for this Comparison in the second test was 33,33%. Summing up both percentages of heavy materials at both structure tests, this indicator, Comparisons, was placed in number seven among eight indicators with a percentage of difficulty 37,04%.

Star (2015) agrees that the students sometimes have difficulties with comparison materials. First, students may make a mistake in comparing the items where they should be similar. Second, students use a different pattern on both sides of the comparison. This problem might make the comparison imbalance. Last, it happens that the students make a double comparison. It

means that the word ending in –er or –est and specific irregular comparisons should not be modified with the other comparisons such as more, most, less, or least since they are already comparative superlative.

h. Unnecessary Words

A word that should not be in a sentence but is still added to the sentence may also be confusing for some students. The question about Unnecessary Word could still make some students fail in answering the correct option. This Unnecessary Words indicator, in this first test, occurred in one number. Among 27 students who took the test, there were still two students answering it wrong. Thus, the percentage of the problematic material for this indicator was 11,11%.

In the second test, Unnecessary Words occurred in 2 questions. Summing up other difficult question percentages, the difficulty percentage for this Unnecessary Word indicator in this second TOEFL Structure test was 47,62%.

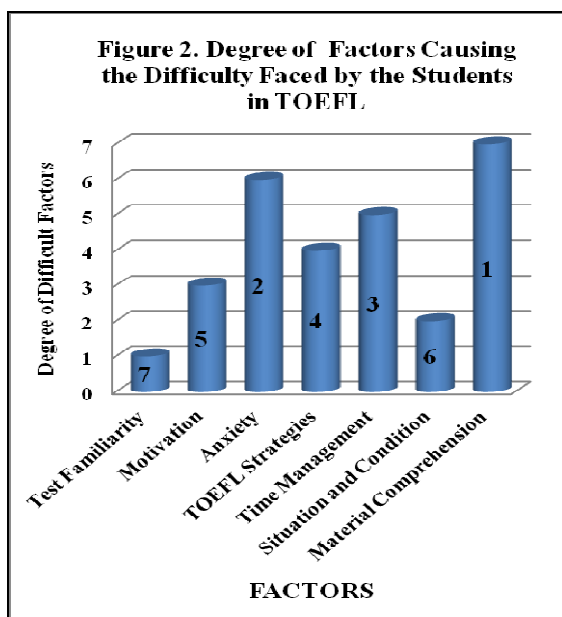
Then, combining those tests, the difficulty percentage of this Unnecessary Word indicator became 29,37%. It could be said that this indicator was much less difficult to

answer by the students where it was placed on the last degree of difficult materials tested in the Structure and Written Expression section of TOEFL.

To avoid failing to answer the correct option in this indicator, Sullivan et al. (2011:76) suggest the students read the whole sentence to see if one of the words sounds strange but seems correct. If the students think a word is double, choose the underlined words next to or in the double words.

4.4. Factors Causing the Difficulties Faced by English Department Students at Bung Hatta University in Structure and Written Expression Section of TOEFL

In answering the fourth research question about the factors causing the students faced difficulties in TOEFL, an interview was used to collect the data. The following was the figure to show the factors causing the difficulty faced by the students in TOEFL viewed from students' personal factor.



The figure above shows that seven factors caused the difficulty faced by the students in TOEFL. The factor that most affected the difficulties faced by the students was the indicator number 7, Material Comprehension. The students found it challenging to comprehend the materials tested in TOEFL. The next factor was Anxiety, Time Management, TOEFL Strategies, Motivation, Situation and Condition, and the last Test Familiarity.

The findings of this research show that the students had difficulty in acquiring the questions in the Structure and Written Expression section of TOEFL since their ability in the test was placed on level C, "Moderate". The factors causing them facing the difficulties are viewed from two factors, material factor and personal factor. It is in accordance with DeKeyser (2003)

who agrees that the factors of the difficulties faced by the students in structure test are distinguished in two terms, namely objective difficulty and subjective difficulty. He explains that objective difficulty concerns the linguistic factors that contribute to the learning difficulty of the structure questions. Meanwhile, subjective difficulty considers individual learner differences. Meaning, the difficulties faced by the students in the structure test also occurred because of their personal factors.

The students face the difficulties in Structure and Written Expression section of TOEFL viewed from material factor are supported by Cohen's statement (2007) who argues that the students find it difficult because they need to understand a complex alphabetic system which asks them to struggle hard to gain what the sentence brings to them. It is because certain crucial factors are ignored or overlooked by some students. Furthermore, Gandi (2014:99) explains that the questions in the structure test often focus on small language points. It means that the students need to focus more on the detail of the testing points. Moreover, this section becomes harder because, besides analyzing the structure of the sentences or clauses, the students

somehow also need to anticipate the correct meaning of the questions. It also means that the students need extra understanding to answer those questions.

In investigating the difficulties faced by the students in TOEFL viewed from their personal factors, among seven indicators provided to be interviewed to the subject of this research, Material Comprehension becomes the most prominent factor causing the students to face the difficulty in TOEFL. Their difficulties in *comprehending materials* were first, because of low basic skills. Students' basic skills are influential. Sugita and Takeuchi (2010) had examined this case and found that the effectiveness of some motivational strategies varied according to students' English proficiency levels. A study by Chang and Liu (2013) also found that participants with high English proficiency levels displayed a significantly higher level of the strategy used. In this case, as found in this research, due to the low basic skills, students display fewer level strategies and less motivation to learn TOEFL. Their low basic skill is proved by seeing the majority of the students get a low level of TOEFL score both in the first and the second tests.

Second, Riyanto (2008:83) adds that TOEFL tests the students' ability to recognize formal written English. The students need to familiar with English in formal written form through having lots of practice, listening to English conversations, and reading many English books. Furthermore, the topics in the test are various engaging with the United States or Canadian history, culture, art, or literature (Pyle and Munoz, 2009:7). Thus, it does not give any particular advantage to an individual in any specific field of study, including English Department students. They know English as the language used in TOEFL, but they have difficulties in understanding the material tested in the test. Henceforth, it is understandable if the students are demanding in comprehending the materials of TOEFL.

Due to this difficulty, there should be awareness from students to comprehend the materials tested in TOEFL before taking the test. They should bear in mind that mastering the TOEFL materials is not only for completing the requirement, but they need to realize the importance of TOEFL for their self-development. It is needed to build students' interest and motivation to learn and master TOEFL by giving them various strategies tested in the test. As

stated by Pan (2009:132), “if lesson content or teaching methodology can be adapted to meet the students’ interests, needs, and level of English proficiency, students may be more interested in learning language, and learning outcomes will, accordingly, much improve”. In other words, it is strongly suggested that employing various strategies is needed to enhance students’ interest in learning TOEFL in order to achieve better score achievement.

Weinstein and Meyer in Macaro (2001:17) also support that learning strategies are the behaviors and thoughts that a learner engages in during learning intended to influence the learners’ encoding process. A study by Nikoopour et al. (2012) showed the critical roles of language learning strategy as one of the cognitive variables highly associated with success and achievement. Meaning, having the right learning strategies will be very beneficial for the students in comprehending the materials to achieve the TOEFL target score. Besides, Brown (2000:60) commented that successful mastery of TOEFL would be due to a large extent of a learner’s investment of time, effort, and attention to that language in the form of an individualized battery of strategies for comprehending and producing the language.

V. Conclusion

In conclusion, the research findings have proved that English Department students at Bung Hatta University faced the difficulty in the Structure and Written Expression section of TOEFL. Thus, these findings describe four shreds of evidence to answer those four research questions related to their difficulties in TOEFL.

To know whether the students face difficulties in TOEFL, it is essential to see their abilities in that test. It is found that 37,04% of English Department students fail in achieving the score required by the university, 400, as the comprehension test requirement. Furthermore, among three sections tested in TOEFL, Structure and Written Expression section is the most difficult test answered by the students. It shows that 44% of the students get the Structure and Written Expression section at the lowest score among the two other sections. Therefore, it can be said that their ability in Structure and Written Expression section of TOEFL is in the C level, “Moderate”, 41%.

Moreover, among eight indicators of Structure and Written Expression materials tested in TOEFL, Inversion is the most difficult one answered by the students since they never learn this

material and need in-depth analysis to answer the question. It shows that from both TOEFL Structure tests, the percentage of difficulty for this material is 85,19%.

Based on the data from the transcripts of the interview, it is gotten that majority of the interviewees argue that TOEFL is difficult to comprehend. Furthermore, when asked about each of the material indicators tested in Structure and Written Expression section of TOEFL, the interviewees comment that all materials are severe with no further explanation. Thus, it makes sense that the students face difficulties in TOEFL materials. In Inversion material, the students are demanding in determining which auxiliaries should be used in the correct form. It also happens because the use of auxiliary in negative inversion depends on the tense used to express them. Hence, this indicator material becomes more complicated.

To know the factors causing the students faced difficulties in TOEFL, they are served in seven indicators of the interview. Through interviewing 18 students of the research subjects, the findings show that Material Comprehension is the most dominant factor, making them difficult in the test.

Henceforth, the findings of this research reinforce the assumption that English Department students at Bung Hatta University registered in the academic year 2014/2015 face the difficulties in the Structure and Written Expression section of TOEFL. These difficulties are viewed from the material factor and personal factor.

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