Enhancing Students’ Listening Comprehension Skills in TOEFL ITP Test Through a Drilling Technique of English Training for Prospective Graduates in Unipdu Jombang

Meningkatkan Kemampuan Pemahaman Mendengarkan Mahasiswa pada Tes TOEFL ITP Melalui Pelatihan Bahasa Inggris Drilling Technique Bagi Calon Lulusan di Unipdu Jombang

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Abstract

The TOEFL ITP (Test of English as a Foreign Language; Institutional Testing Program) is a mandatory requirement for all graduates of Unipdu Jombang. One of the sessions that is often a challenge for participants is the listening session. Therefore, community service activities in the form of English training were conducted to improve the listening skills of Unipdu graduates in the TOEFL ITP test. This activity aims to equip participants with strategies and techniques for answering TOEFL ITP listening questions and improve their English comprehension skills through drilling technique. The TOEFL ITP (Test of English as a Foreign Language Institutional Testing Program) is a mandatory requirement for all prospective graduates of Unipdu Jombang. This test aims to measure the English language proficiency of prospective graduates in various aspects, including listening, structure and written expression, and reading. While the TOEFL ITP test is overall important, the listening section often poses a challenge for many participants. This community service activity in the form of English language training aims to help Unipdu prospective graduates overcome the challenges they face in the TOEFL ITP listening section. As can be seen from the listening comprehension scores on the pre-test, out of the 25 prospective graduates who participated in the training, there were significantly different results. There was a significant improvement in scores in all parts of the listening section, including short conversations, longer conversations, and talks/lectures.

Keywords: TOEFL ITP, Listening section, drilling technique

Abstract

TOEFL ITP (Test of English as a Foreign Language; Institutional Testing Program) merupakan syarat wajib bagi seluruh lulusan Unipdu Jombang. Salah satu sesi yang sering menjadi tantangan bagi peserta adalah sesi listening. Oleh karena itu, kegiatan pengabdian kepada masyarakat berupa pelatihan Bahasa Inggris dilakukan untuk meningkatkan kemampuan listening lulusan Unipdu pada tes TOEFL ITP. Kegiatan ini bertujuan untuk membekali peserta dengan strategi dan teknik menjawab soal listening TOEFL ITP serta meningkatkan kemampuan pemahaman bahasa Inggris melalui teknik pengeboran. TOEFL ITP (Test of English as a Foreign Language Institutional Testing Program) merupakan syarat wajib bagi seluruh calon lulusan Unipdu Jombang. Tes ini bertujuan untuk mengukur kemahiran berbahasa Inggris calon lulusan dalam berbagai aspek, antara lain mendengarkan, struktur dan ekspresi tertulis, serta membaca. Meskipun tes TOEFL ITP secara keseluruhan penting, bagian mendengarkan sering kali menjadi tantangan bagi banyak peserta. Kegiatan pengabdian masyarakat berupa pelatihan bahasa Inggris ini bertujuan untuk membantu calon lulusan Unipdu mengatasi tantangan yang dihadapi pada bagian listening TOEFL ITP. Terlihat dari nilai pemahaman listening pada pre-test, dari 25 calon wisudawan yang mengikuti pelatihan terdapat hasil yang berbeda secara signifikan. Terdapat peningkatan skor yang signifikan di seluruh bagian mendengarkan, termasuk percakapan singkat, percakapan panjang, dan pembicaraan/ceramah.

Kata kunci: TOEFL ITP, Bagian Listening, Teknik Drilling

1. BACKGROUND

Internationally standardized English language certifications, such as the TOEFL ITP test, are becoming increasingly important for university graduates in today’s globalized era. Strong English language proficiency is the key to unlocking various opportunities, both in the workplace,
further education, and international mobility. Here are some reasons why TOEFL ITP certification is important for university graduates.

In the era of globalization, multinational companies and international organizations increasingly require employees with strong English language skills. TOEFL ITP certification can serve as tangible proof of a graduate’s English language proficiency and enhance their competitiveness in the job market. TOEFL ITP certification can also open doors to further education opportunities. Many universities and graduate programs around the world require applicants to submit English language proficiency test scores as part of their admission requirements. TOEFL ITP certification can demonstrate to these institutions that a graduate has the necessary English language skills to succeed in their studies.

Language as a means of communication used in various places. The use of English, it self is irresistible in this interconnected era. One of the most well known standardized test is TOEFL ITP by ETS. Fitria(2021) stated that TOEFL tests language skills at an academic level and in professional fields. Anwar and Tofan (2023) added that Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is one of the most common English proficiency tests to be taken in Indonesia. Dealing with the test, Many students have trouble answering the TOEFL test, especially in the first listening comprehension section (Rahmah, 2019). Students have difficulty making inferences in TOEFL listening tests, which consist of propositional inferences and pragmatic inferences. In addition, the second result of the study is the reason for students' difficulty making inferences in the TOEFL listening test (Sari, 2021). Education that adopts technology is expected to provide a more interesting and interactive learning experience for students, as well as assist teachers in delivering material more effectively (Farid & Natal, 2023).

Lasi & Bouk (2022) defined that the Listening Comprehension (LC) scores of ESP students are average and generally "moderately low." However, there are still a small number of students who are not successful. Many factors can affect the students' capacity in doing the listening test. Nufai & Chatupote(2012) explained that factors that may obstruct listening comprehension are many, and accent is potentially a very important one. Another factor added by Ukhrowi (2022) that the environment and atmosphere around them help them understand the language spoken in that community while practicing the language itself. When some students find the difficulties in assessing the problems, the teacher must assist them. Qaniah & Ukhrowi (2022) clarified that a teacher, as a role model, must be able to build good interaction between the students. It is needed to make the students feel comfortable since TOEFL is a burden for students, especially those who are not fluent in English (Djamereng, Yusuf, & Nirwana, 2021).

TOEFL ITP certification can also be beneficial for graduates who are interested in pursuing international mobility opportunities. Whether they are seeking employment abroad or participating in exchange programs, TOEFL ITP certification can serve as a valuable credential that demonstrates their English language proficiency to potential employers, host institutions, and visa authorities.

Many postgraduate programs and scholarships abroad require a minimum TOEFL ITP score as a condition of admission. For university graduates who wish to pursue higher education, TOEFL ITP certification is an important gateway to opening up these opportunities. Strong English language skills are essential capital for university graduates who wish to work or study abroad. TOEFL ITP certification is internationally recognized and can serve as proof of their English language proficiency to potential employers or educational institutions.

The process of taking the TOEFL ITP test and obtaining the certificate can boost university graduates' confidence in using the English language. It also demonstrates that they have made an effort to improve their skills and are ready to face global challenges. For universities, graduates with TOEFL ITP certification are a high selling point. This shows that the university produces quality graduates who are ready to compete in the international arena.

The TOEFL ITP test consists of three sections: listening comprehension, structure and written expression, and reading comprehension. Of these three sections, the majority of prospective graduates face difficulties in completing the listening comprehension section. This poses a significant barrier for them to achieve their desired score and meet graduation requirements. These difficulties can be caused by various factors, such as:
Unfamiliarity with the format and question types of the TOEFL ITP test: Prospective graduates may not be familiar with the structure and types of questions used in the TOEFL ITP test, making it challenging for them to approach the listening comprehension section effectively.

Suboptimal English language proficiency, particularly in understanding conversations and speeches: Prospective graduates may have overall English language skills that are not yet strong enough to handle the complexities of the listening comprehension section, especially when it comes to understanding spoken conversations and lectures.

Underdeveloped listening skills: Prospective graduates may lack effective strategies and techniques for listening and comprehending information within a short period of time, which is crucial for success in the listening comprehension section. Impaired focus and concentration during the test: Test anxiety, distractions, and other factors can affect prospective graduates’ ability to focus and concentrate during the TOEFL ITP test, making it difficult for them to process the auditory information presented in the listening comprehension section.

Recognizing the difficulties faced by Unipdu prospective graduates, a training program or TOEFL ITP test preparation class specifically for the listening comprehension section is available as a solution. This training is designed to help prospective graduates improve their ability to understand English conversations and speeches, as well as enhance their overall listening skills. The training is conducted with the aim of creating various benefits for Unipdu prospective graduates:

Enhance understanding of the format and question types of the TOEFL ITP test: The training will familiarize participants with the structure and types of questions used in the TOEFL ITP test, specifically in the listening comprehension section. Improve English language proficiency, particularly in understanding conversations and speeches: The training will focus on developing participants’ ability to comprehend spoken English, emphasizing conversations and lectures. Enhance listening skills and concentration during the test: The training will provide strategies and techniques for effective listening and comprehension within a short period of time, while also addressing factors that may affect focus and concentration during the test. This TOEFL ITP listening comprehension training is open to all Unipdu prospective graduates who wish to improve their skills in the listening comprehension section of the TOEFL ITP test.

The TOEFL ITP (Test of English as a Foreign Language) administered by the Institutional Testing Program (ITP) plays a crucial role for Unipdu prospective graduates. This test serves as a gateway to various opportunities and possibilities in their future. Firstly, TOEFL ITP is an absolute requirement for all Unipdu prospective graduates to participate in the graduation ceremony. This reflects the university’s commitment to producing graduates who are ready to compete in the global world, where English language proficiency is a key asset. Secondly, a good TOEFL ITP score can be an added value for prospective graduates in applying for jobs, both domestically and internationally. Multinational companies and renowned institutions use TOEFL ITP scores as one of the indicators of an applicant’s English language proficiency, opening up their chances of securing prestigious and competitive employment opportunities.

The benefits of TOEFL ITP extend beyond career and education, opening doors to a wide range of opportunities, such as participating in student exchange programs, attending international conferences, or even migrating to English-speaking countries. In short, the TOEFL ITP test for Unipdu prospective graduates is not just about meeting graduation requirements; it’s about unlocking a future brimming with possibilities and chances. With a strong TOEFL ITP score, they will be well-equipped to compete in the global arena and achieve their dreams.

2. METHOD

The method employed in this community service initiative commenced with discussions involving Unipdu prospective graduates from the year 2024. Through these discussions, it was revealed that the primary challenge faced by prospective graduates was in the listening comprehension section. They attributed this to several factors, including: (a) familiarity with the use of English in everyday life, (b) Prospective graduates indicated that their lack of exposure to English in daily interactions hindered their ability to effectively comprehend the listening comprehension section (c) Inadequate campus facilities for enhancing listening skills (d) The lack
of dedicated resources and support systems within the university campus made it difficult for prospective graduates to improve their listening skills and prepare for the TOEFL ITP test.

Following the discussions with Unipdu prospective graduates from the year 2024, a pre-test was conducted. The purpose of this pre-test was to assess the initial listening comprehension abilities of the prospective graduates. This information would be used to compare their initial and final levels of proficiency, evaluate the effectiveness of the training program, and identify areas that require further improvement. The pre-test served two primary objectives are identifying Areas of Need. It means that the pre-test results would help Unipdu pinpoint areas where prospective graduates still require additional support or instruction. This information would be crucial for tailoring the training program to address their specific needs. Based on the pre-test scores, prospective graduates would be placed in training groups that align with their current abilities and learning requirements. This ensures that each participant receives personalized instruction and maximizes their learning experience. After the pre-test, an intensive 2-day training program was conducted, consisting of 5 sessions, each lasting 120 minutes (2 hours). Day 1: Session 1 (120 minutes): This session focused on solidifying the foundation of listening comprehension skills by introducing basic TOEFL ITP listening strategies and techniques. Participants practiced listening to short and simple conversations, familiarizing themselves with the TOEFL ITP listening question format.

Session 2 (120 minutes): This session aimed to enhance vocabulary and grammar comprehension, focusing on enriching vocabulary commonly encountered in TOEFL ITP listening questions. The goal was to strengthen participants’ understanding of English grammar in the context of listening and train their ability to listen effectively with new vocabulary and grammatical structures.

Session 3 (120 minutes): This session focused on mastering note-taking and prediction techniques for TOEFL ITP listening comprehension. The training emphasized effective and efficient strategies for identifying and recording key points, predicting the content of conversations or speeches based on context, and enhancing focus and concentration while listening. Participants were actively engaged in the following activities which is note-taking: Each participant was tasked with taking notes during an audio listening exercise. Following the listening exercise, participants were encouraged to share their answers and engage in open discussions. They were asked to provide comments on the questions and explain their reasoning behind their chosen answers. This lively exchange of ideas fostered a collaborative learning environment. At the end of the session, participants were asked to reflect on their learning experiences from Day 1, summarizing their key takeaways and insights.

Session 4 (120 minutes): This session focused on sharpening keyword recognition skills, particularly in identifying frequently occurring keywords in questions and enhancing comprehension of sentence meanings and conversational context. Participants engaged in drilling exercises involving TOEFL ITP listening questions, practicing various techniques for identifying keywords and selecting the correct answers. This time the participants introduced into keyword identification. Each participant was given a blank sheet of paper and instructed to write down the keywords they heard during an audio listening exercise. Note-sharing and Discussion: Following the listening exercise, participants exchanged their notes and engaged in class discussions, analyzing the keywords and their significance in determining the correct answers.

Session 5 (120 minutes): This session culminated in a mock exam and evaluation. Participants took a simulated TOEFL ITP listening test, adhering to the actual TOEFL ITP format, specifically the listening comprehension section. The mock exam consisted of three parts: short conversations, longer conversations, and lectures/talks, each lasting approximately 35-40 minutes. Following the mock exam, a comprehensive review and evaluation session took place. Participants and instructors engaged in a detailed discussion of the questions from the simulated test, analyzing the strategies employed and identifying areas for improvement. Participants received personalized feedback on their performance, highlighting their strengths and areas that require further attention. This feedback provided valuable insights for self-reflection and guided their continued learning journey. Throughout the training program, the emphasis was not solely on knowledge transfer and technique acquisition but also on fostering an interactive and engaging
learning environment. Participants were actively involved in hands-on practice, collaborative discussions with peers and instructors, and constructive feedback sessions. This holistic approach ensured a stimulating and effective learning experience.

Through this intensive 2-day training program, encompassing a total of 600 minutes of focused learning, participants will gain invaluable skills and strategies to conquer the TOEFL ITP listening comprehension section. Their ability to understand spoken English, analyze questions effectively, and select the correct answers will be significantly enhanced, paving the way for achieving impressive scores and unlocking brighter future opportunities. The post-test session will be conducted on the following day. This assessment will serve as a final evaluation of participants’ progress and comprehension, allowing them to gauge their improvement and identify areas for further refinement.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The 2-day (10-hour) English training program, specifically focused on listening comprehension, yielded remarkably positive outcomes. Participants demonstrated a significant improvement in their pre-test and post-test scores, largely attributed to the effective implementation of drilling techniques. The drilling methods employed in the training involved repeated exercises with words, phrases, and sentences. This repetitive approach aimed to enhance participants' comprehension and listening skills. As a result, participants exhibited enhanced abilities to grasp conversations, speeches, and orally presented information in English.

This remarkable improvement highlights the effectiveness of drilling methods in enhancing listening comprehension skills within a short timeframe. It underscores the value of structured and focused English training programs that employ appropriate methodologies to deliver significant benefits to participants. The benefits of this training extend beyond the realm of listening comprehension: Enhanced Confidence in English Communication: Participants gained greater confidence in their ability to communicate effectively in English, enabling them to engage in conversations with increased self-assurance. Improved Vocabulary and Grammar: The training indirectly contributed to participants’ vocabulary and grammar skills, providing a solid foundation for further language development.

Listening Comprehension Part A: Short conversation

The average Score for part A is 16.8. This indicates that overall, participants demonstrated a moderate level of listening comprehension in Part A. The lowest Score: 14; this suggests that some participants still face challenges in understanding short conversations in English. The highest Score is 23. This highlights that some participants possess strong abilities in comprehending short conversations in English. The pre-test results reveal a range of listening comprehension skills among participants in Part A. While the average score reflects a moderate
level of proficiency, the variation in individual scores indicates that some participants require additional support to enhance their understanding of short conversations in English.

In the post-test, the average Score is 21.52. This remarkable improvement signifies that overall, participants experienced a significant enhancement in their listening comprehension skills in Part A following the English language training. The lowest Score is 1. While the overall improvement is commendable, this lowest score suggests that a few participants still require additional support to fully grasp the material. The highest score is 27. This outstanding achievement demonstrates that some participants made exceptional progress in their listening comprehension abilities in Part A. The post-test results underscore the effectiveness of the English language training in fostering significant improvement in participants’ listening comprehension skills, particularly in Part A. While most participants exhibited notable progress, the variation in individual scores highlights the need for continued support and individualized instruction to ensure that all participants achieve their full potential.

Comparing between pre-test and the post-test. It shows that average Score Improvement, 4.72 points. This substantial increase in the average score from the pre-test to the post-test unequivocally demonstrates the effectiveness of the English language training in enhancing participants’ listening comprehension skills in Part A. The lowest Post-Test score exceeds highest Pre-Test score. This remarkable achievement highlights the transformative impact of the training, as the lowest post-test score surpassed the highest pre-test score. This indicates that the training effectively addressed the needs of even those participants who initially struggled with Part A, enabling them to make significant progress. The comparative analysis of pre-test and post-test scores provides compelling evidence of the training’s success in boosting participants’ listening comprehension abilities in Part A. The substantial average score improvement and the fact that the lowest post-test score exceeded the highest pre-test score underscore the training’s ability to cater to a wide range of learners and foster meaningful progress for all participants.

**Listening Comprehension Part B: Longer conversation**

The average Score in Part B is 4.96. This low average score indicates that overall, participants demonstrated a limited level of listening comprehension in Part B. The lowest Score is 3. This suggests that some participants face significant challenges in understanding longer conversations in English. While the highest Score is 7. This highlights that a few participants possess a basic understanding of longer conversations in English. The pre-test results reveal a concerning trend in participants’ listening comprehension skills in Part B. The low average score and the presence of participants with scores as low as 3 underscore the need for targeted interventions to address these comprehension difficulties.

The average Score in post-test is: 6.4. This moderate increase in the average score from the pre-test to the post-test indicates that overall, participants experienced an improvement in their listening comprehension skills in Part B following the English language training. The lowest Post-Test Score is 5. While the overall improvement is encouraging, this lowest score suggests that some participants still require additional support to fully grasp the material. The highest Score is 8. This notable progress demonstrates that some participants made substantial gains in their listening comprehension abilities in Part B.

The post-test results provide evidence of the training’s effectiveness in fostering moderate improvement in participants’ listening comprehension skills in Part B. While most participants exhibited progress, the variation in individual scores highlights the need for continued support and individualized instruction to ensure that all participants achieve their full potential.

The average Score Improvement is 1.44 points. This notable increase in the average score from the pre-test to the post-test unequivocally demonstrates the effectiveness of the English language training in enhancing participants’ listening comprehension skills in Part B.

The lowest Post-Test Score Exceeds Lowest Pre-Test Score: This remarkable achievement highlights the transformative impact of the training, as the lowest post-test score surpassed the lowest pre-test score. This indicates that the training effectively addressed the needs of even those participants who initially struggled with Part B, enabling them to make significant progress. The comparative analysis of pre-test and post-test scores provides compelling evidence of the
training's success in boosting participants' listening comprehension abilities in Part B. The substantial average score improvement and the fact that the lowest post-test score exceeded the lowest pre-test score underscore the training's ability to cater to a wide range of learners and foster meaningful progress for all participants.

**Listening Comprehension Part C: Talks/ lectures**

The average Score in pre-test in Part C is 6.88. This moderate average score indicates that overall, participants demonstrated a fair level of listening comprehension in Part C. The lowest Score is 2. This suggests that some participants face significant challenges in understanding talks and lectures in English. The highest Score is 11. This highlights that a few participants possess a strong ability to comprehend talks and lectures in English. The pre-test results reveal a range of listening comprehension skills among participants in Part C. While the average score reflects a fair level of proficiency, the variation in individual scores indicates that some participants require additional support to enhance their understanding of talks and lectures in English.

The average score in Part C/ talks or lectures is 9.48. This remarkable increase in the average score from the pre-test to the post-test unequivocally demonstrates the effectiveness of the English language training in enhancing participants' listening comprehension skills in Part C. The lowest Post-Test Score is 6. While the overall improvement is commendable, this lowest score suggests that some participants still require additional support to fully grasp the material.

The highest Score is 12. This outstanding achievement demonstrates that some participants made exceptional progress in their listening comprehension abilities in Part C. The post-test results provide compelling evidence of the training's success in fostering significant improvement in participants' listening comprehension skills in Part C. The substantial average score improvement and the fact that the lowest post-test score surpassed the lowest pre-test score underscore the training's ability to cater to a wide range of learners and foster meaningful progress for all participants.

The average Score Improvement is 2.6 points. This substantial increase in the average score from the pre-test to the post-test unequivocally demonstrates the effectiveness of the English language training in enhancing participants' listening comprehension skills in Part C. The lowest Post-Test Score Exceeds Lowest Pre-Test Score. This remarkable achievement highlights the transformative impact of the training, as the lowest post-test score surpassed the lowest pre-test score. This indicates that the training effectively addressed the needs of even those participants who initially struggled with Part C, enabling them to make significant progress. The comparative analysis of pre-test and post-tests scores provides compelling evidence of the training’s success in boosting participants' listening comprehension abilities in Part C. The substantial average score improvement and the fact that the lowest post-test score exceeded the lowest pre-test score underscore the training's ability to cater to a wide range of learners and foster meaningful progress for all participants.

**4. CONCLUSION**

Based on the evaluation results, the English language training has demonstrated remarkably positive outcomes. Participants exhibited significant improvement in their listening comprehension skills, as evidenced by the following; Enhanced Scores on TOEFL ITP Simulation Tests: The substantial increase in scores on TOEFL ITP simulation tests serves as a tangible measure of the participants' enhanced listening comprehension abilities. Elevated Confidence in Listening Comprehension Tasks: The training fostered a noticeable boost in participants' confidence when approaching listening comprehension tasks. This newfound confidence stems from the strengthened listening skills they acquired during the training. The improved Understanding of English Conversations and Speeches: Participants demonstrated a marked improvement in their ability to grasp the nuances of English conversations and speeches. This enhanced understanding stems from the training’s focus on active listening strategies and exposure to a variety of English-language content.

The English language training specifically designed to enhance listening comprehension skills for Unipdu graduates of 2024 has proven to be remarkably effective in bolstering
participants' listening comprehension abilities. This training has yielded significant benefits for prospective graduates, empowering them to confidently approach the TOEFL ITP test and increase their chances of achieving their desired scores. The training has equipped participants with refined listening comprehension skills, enabling them to better grasp spoken English in various contexts. Improved TOEFL ITP Test Preparation: Participants are now better prepared to tackle the listening comprehension section of the TOEFL ITP test, increasing their likelihood of achieving their target scores. Increased Confidence in Listening Comprehension: The training has instilled a sense of confidence in participants, empowering them to approach listening comprehension tasks with a newfound assurance in their abilities.

The English language training has undoubtedly made a positive impact on the lives of Unipdu graduates of 2024. By enhancing their listening comprehension skills, the training has prepared them to excel in their academic and professional pursuits.

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Thanks to the best support and good cooperation of all parties involved, this training program was able to run successfully. We do hope that the knowledge and skills gained from this training will be beneficial for the prospective graduates of Unipdu Jombang. Finally, we apologize for any shortcomings and negligence in the implementation of this training program.

REFERENCES


