



Unlocking Global Opportunities with “TOEFL Training Program” for Islamic Boarding School Students

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Abstract

When it comes to obtaining a higher education in a foreign country, particularly within the context of the TOEFL, it is absolutely necessary to have a strong command of the English language. The objective of this community service project is to familiarize students from Dayah Darul Ulum Al Munawwarah, one of the prestigious Islamic Boarding School in Lhokseumawe, with the TOEFL. This community service program is being carried out through Participatory Action Learning System (PALS). Participants' English language skills in TOEFL are improved through the program, which consists of twelve sessions that are led by two different professional tutors. The program was met with enthusiastic attendance, which highlighted the participants' eagerness to improve their proficiency level in preparation for the students' future education endeavors. In considering the fact that scores on TOEFL serve as an eligibility requirement for admission to universities located in other countries, this collaborative training initiative plays a crucial role in enabling students from Islamic Boarding School to successfully navigate educational opportunities located in other countries.

Keywords: TOEFL, Islamic Boarding School, Global

Abstrak

Abstrak Dalam hal memperoleh pendidikan tinggi di luar negeri, khususnya dalam konteks TOEFL, sangatlah penting untuk memiliki penguasaan bahasa Inggris yang kuat. Tujuan dari program pengabdian masyarakat ini adalah untuk membiasakan para siswa dari Dayah Darul Ulum Al Munawwarah, salah satu pesantren di Lhokseumawe, dengan tes TOEFL. Program pengabdian masyarakat ini dilaksanakan dengan metode Participatory Action Learning System (PALS). Kemampuan bahasa Inggris peserta dalam TOEFL ditingkatkan melalui program ini, yang terdiri dari dua belas sesi yang dipandu oleh dua tutor profesional. Program ini disambut dengan antusias oleh para peserta dan pimpinan madrasah, yang menunjukkan keinginan para peserta untuk meningkatkan kemampuan mereka sebagai persiapan untuk pendidikan mereka

di masa depan. Mengingat skor TOEFL merupakan salah satu syarat untuk masuk ke universitas di negara lain, inisiatif pelatihan kolaboratif ini memainkan peran penting dalam membantu para santri dari Pondok Pesantren untuk dapat berhasil menavigasi peluang pendidikan di negara lain.

Kata kunci: TOEFL, Pesantren, Global

Introduction

The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is an acronym that denotes the level to which an individual is proficient in the English language. This evaluative instrument is recognized on a global scale (Cho et al., 2017). This examination is of a crucial nature because it is an essential requirement for admission to tertiary education, which can range from master's degrees to doctoral degrees, and it is also required in order to obtain prestigious employment opportunities (Ginanjar & Rizkianfi, 2021).

Individuals who want to achieve greatness in academic and professional fields should take the TOEFL. This is a non-profit educational and assessment organization established in the United States (managed by ETS). Further, the TOEFL demonstrates its adaptability by adopting numerous forms, including examinations based on paper, assessments based on computers, and assessments based on the internet. The TOEFL, a thorough assessment instrument, evaluates all essential language competencies, and use of a multidimensional method that ensure a comprehensive evaluation of an individual's language aptitude. TOEFL is a globally recognized and acknowledged credential (De Jong & Benigno, 2017). According to Goulbovich et al. (2018), it has been used to assess academic English competency by over 11,500 institutions in over 160 countries.

Furthermore, a rigorous set of standards is established in TOEFL, with a particular emphasis placed on the significance of academic language comprehension and usage. Consequently, individuals who successfully navigate the TOEFL not only demonstrate their proficient language skills but also conform to benchmarks that are recognized all over the world, thus establishing the foundation for academic achievement in an international setting that is becoming more interconnected and competitive (Goulbovich et al., 2018). It is believed that the low results on the TOEFL are due to deficiencies in the strategies and techniques used to learn the English language of the students.

The weakness of teaching in English is present at every level of education, beginning with junior high school and continuing through senior high school and vocational school. Even at the college level, the weakness of teaching in English is still present (Halim & Ardinintyas, 2018). In point of fact, the disadvantages of teaching English have been recognized ever since the very beginning. In the field of English studies, the government, specifically the Ministry of National Education, has been working with the intention of continuously enhancing both the curriculum and the instructional materials (Widanta et al., 2016). As a result, it is hoped that this community service will contribute to the selection of efficient learning strategies and

methods for the purpose of enhancing English language skills, particularly with regard to the results of the TOEFL.

Due to the fact that Arabic and English are incorporated into the activities that take place on a daily basis in Islamic boarding school, this community service initiative is well positioned to tackle the challenges that are already present in language instruction. Being able to actively contribute to the identification and implementation of highly effective learning strategies and methods is therefore the primary focus of this Islamic boarding school. The end goal is to improve students' English proficiency, with a particular emphasis on improving their results on the TOEFL. Recognizing the unique implementation that takes place within Islamic boarding school (Tabroni et al., 2023), this community service program aims to make the most of the inherent advantages that are present in this setting. As a result, the Islamic boarding school strives to facilitate the development of learning strategies that are not only congruent with the students' specific language contexts, but also enrich those approaches (Munawwarah, 2023). The goal is to develop an approach to English language education that is more impactful and culturally relevant, and that is also attuned to the daily experiences and linguistic nuances that are common in boarding schools.

A mutually beneficial connection between the school's linguistic diversity and improved English proficiency was the goal of this introductory program, which was undertaken with the intention of going beyond conventional teaching methodologies. The goal of this community service program is to establish a pedagogical framework that is not only effective in addressing language deficiencies but also promotes a deeper understanding and appreciation of the cultural dimensions of English language practice (Yuzar & Rahmiaty, 2022). Equally essential, this specific program is to promote a holistic and contextual approach, and such will be accomplished by increasing students' English competency and engagement.

Method

In resolving shortcomings in language learning methodologies, this study utilized the Participatory Action Learning System (PALS), the objective is to equip students with the ability to navigate the complex requirements of standardized language proficiency test, like the TOEFL. PALS, an instructional framework developed with the focus on collaborative learning and active engagement, functions as a dynamic system to involve students in the process of improving their language proficiency (Mayoux, 2005). The goal of implementing PALS in this program is to go beyond traditional pedagogical approaches by cultivating an immersive and participatory learning environment that is congruent with the students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds. As a result, the program aims to develop an individualized and culturally appropriate strategy to ensure that language instruction becomes an important and necessary component of the academic development of Islamic boarding school students by capitalizing on the distinctive setting of Dayah Darul Ulum Al Munawwarah.

Dayah Darul Ulum Al Munawwarah, a well-known Islamic Boarding School located in Lhokseumawe, and the State Islamic Institutes came together to form a partnership with the overarching objective of enhancing the English language proficiency of the students and

participants. In light of the fact that English is becoming increasingly significant in academic and professional contexts, as well as the fact that it is significant as a global language (Rahman & Saputra, 2021), both institutions have worked together to provide a course of instruction that is both comprehensive and immersive.

Participants in this community service program had a life-changing experience as a result of the collaborative training initiative, which created an atmosphere that was conducive to interactive and interesting language learning. Further, in the course of the engaging language-learning program, which carried out from August 7th to October 23rd 2023, the program will be broken down into a total of twelve different sessions respectively. It is possible to take the approach to language learning with the help of this well-structured timeline and guidelines. Every component of English language skill is thoroughly covered and strengthened during the TOEFL exam. Because the meetings are spaced out over two and a half months, this enables the tutors to effectively apply the strategy, as they can properly monitor the progress of the students.

The teachers for this training program have extensive expertise leading these sorts of sessions, and they have also taken the TOEFL exam multiple times and received a score of at least 600. They also have a professional background in this field. They may identify with the challenges that community service volunteers face because of their direct experience as exam takers. As a result, they are able to provide personalized instruction and assistance during the entire training process. The tutoring sessions are intended to help participants enhance their language abilities as well as their test-taking techniques. This will be accomplished by utilizing effective teaching approaches, interactive exercises, and helpful hints. The tutors will draw on their expertise and experience in this sector. The training curriculum is assured to cover all elements completely and comprehensively. The application of this technique not only improves training continuity, but also gives participants the opportunity to develop learning experiences with the instructors throughout the course of two and a half months.

Result and Discussion

Community service is an effort to disseminate science, technology and art to the community. These activities must be able to provide an added value to the community, both in economic activities, policies, and behavior change (social). Describe that service activities have been able to make changes to individuals/communities and institutions, both short and long term.

The PALS framework designed by Mayoux (2005) acts as a dynamic system to involve students in the process of developing their English language skills. Furthermore, because the training program is spread out over two months and comprises of twelve meetings, participants will go through a steady and organized learning process. Because the timeline has been extended from its initial length, the participants will have plenty of time to practice and internalize the language skills that will be taught to them by the tutors. Participants will be able to evaluate their progress and identify areas for improvement by using regular assessments and feedback sessions. As a result, it is reasonable to expect that by the end of the program,

participants will have seen a discernible improvement in their language proficiency, which will position them positively for higher overall TOEFL scores. As a result, participants will not only enhance their language skills, but will also gain confidence in their ability to speak English in a range of academic and professional settings. This will be completed over the course of the program. As a result, persons who participate in community service will be extremely well-prepared to explore possibilities for higher education both within the United States and in other nations.

In addition to this, they will be provided with the language skills that are essential for them to compete successfully in the academic fields that they choose. If the training program is effective and success, the participants will definitely gain the confidence needed to take advantage of a wide range of educational opportunities and to make a positive contribution to both their local communities and the world at large.

Table 1. The TOEFL Program in *Dayah Darul Ulum Al-Munawwarah*

Aspect	Details
Activity Facilitators	Two experienced tutors, who have completed comparable trainings and taken the TOEFL on multiple occasions, with a minimum score of 600.
Material Provided	There are many different kinds of assessment materials, such as explanations and examples of questions from four different skill categories.
Duration	Twelve meetings held over the course of two months

The TOEFL is an important exam that is used to assess the level of English proficiency. Thus, investigating the TOEFL test thoroughly, paying close attention to its distinct structure and concentrating on the various sections of it will ease the understanding of its structure and core. In this specific program, participants will not only become familiar with the complexities of the examination as they progress through this introductory phase, but they will also have the basis for a comprehensive understanding of the test's aspects



Figure 1. Introduction to TOEFL test

. Further, they learned about the highly sophisticated scoring system, which is an important component that serves as the foundation of the TOEFL test process. By understanding the specific criteria and score descriptors used to determine how their own language skills are equally significant in this phase. Moreover, this foundational overview will provide the participants with a solid foundation for the participants' TOEFL preparation.

Subsequently, during this preliminary phase, participants need to consider that the TOEFL test is more than just a standard evaluation; it is an opportunity for them to improve themselves and become more fluent in the language. The following stages will entail the implementation of specific strategies as well as participation in purposeful practice sessions, which will ultimately ensure that you are prepared to face the challenges that this internationally recognized language proficiency test presents.

The successful implementation of the Participatory Action Learning System (PALS) was critical in providing participants with a transformative learning experience throughout the twelve-meeting TOEFL training program. The dynamic and interactive instructional style known as PALS has been effectively implemented in order to delve thoroughly into all facets of the TOEFL examination procedure. The program's organized agenda provided participants with a firm foundation in each of the following areas, ensuring a full examination of each language skills within the program.



Figure 2. TOEFL training practices

These lessons were clearly successful because the participants improved their language abilities and developed confidence in their ability to manage the TOEFL's skills setbacks. The participants actively participated in the learning process by using PALS, which contributed to the creation of an environment that encouraged cooperation, dialogue, and the sharing of insights. The inclusion of practical exercises and sample work let participants to use their newly gained knowledge in a meaningful environment, thereby increasing their understanding of the TOEFL evaluation requirements.

Furthermore, because the training lays a heavy emphasis on the development of core abilities, participants have been prepared with a solid foundation in language, allowing them to succeed on the TOEFL exam, the participants left each meeting with the abilities to ace the TOEFL test, whether it was strengthening strategies for all sections. The successful implementation of the TOEFL training program, guided by the appropriate use of PALS, attests to the program's transforming impact on participants, opening the road for such participants to continue to achieve success in English language proficiency.

Conclusion

Eventually, the 12-session TOEFL training program at Dayah Darul Ulum Al Munawwarah was a huge success, marking a significant turning point in the participants' journey to English language fluency. The intentional use of the Participatory Active Learning System (PALS), which fosters a collaborative and engaging learning environment, has been the cornerstone of this achievement. Throughout the program, participants were not only recipients of information but also active contributors to their own linguistic growth, developing all essential skills. The participants' increased confidence and language ability demonstrate the campaign's success.

The program's all-encompassing approach, which addressed every aspect of the TOEFL exam, resulted in a comprehensive and personalized learning experience. Participants now have a strong foundation in core language skills and are better prepared to meet the requirements of the TOEFL exam. Looking back at the program's outcomes, it is clear that incorporating PALS was critical in developing an effective and dynamic educational framework. Furthermore, the benefits of these 12 meetings will extend beyond the classroom, allowing participants to approach their academic and professional endeavors with renewed linguistic proficiency. The success of the TOEFL training program at Dayah Darul Ulum Al Munawwarah is a testament to the hard work of both learners and facilitators, highlighting the transformative potential of language instruction in the context of Islamic boarding schools.

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