

IMPROVING TEACHERS' ABILITY IN PREPARING ENGLISH COMPETENCIES THROUGH TOEFL FOR PREPARATION OF SCHOLARSHIP REQUIREMENTS

Ayuliamita Abadi *, Sri Ramdayeni Sakunti, Aryawira Pratama, Edi Rozal, Monalisa, Tartila, Netti Zurnelli, Latifatul Zuhriyah

Universitas Islam Negeri Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi

Jl. Jambi - Muara Bulian No.KM. 16, Simpang Sungai Duren, Kec. Jambi Luar Kota, Kabupaten Muaro Jambi, Jambi, Indonesia

Email: ayuliamitaabadi@uinjambi.ac.id

Abstract

Abstract. This community service program aimed to enhance the English language proficiency of teachers in Kabupaten Tanjung Jabung Timur through TOEFL training as a preparation for scholarship applications. Using the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach, the program involved 26 teachers from various schools, including classroom teachers, non-English subject teachers, and English teachers. Conducted over seven sessions, the program began with a pre-test to evaluate participants' initial abilities and concluded with a post-test using TOEFL Prediction to measure progress. The pre-test results indicated that participants' TOEFL Prediction scores ranged from 300 to 370, highlighting the need for structured training. Through interactive methods, group discussions, simulations, and mentoring, participants improved their understanding of TOEFL material and test-taking strategies. The post-test results demonstrated significant progress, with scores ranging from 400 to 460. Participants also gained confidence in facing the TOEFL exam and understanding how to integrate English learning into their teaching practices. The program successfully fostered collaboration between educational institutions, local governments, and communities, ensuring its sustainability. Overall, this initiative not only improved teachers' English proficiency but also contributed to enhancing the quality of education in Kabupaten Tanjung Jabung Timur, preparing teachers and Participants alike for better educational opportunities.

Keywords: English Competencies, TOEFL, Scholarship

INTRODUCTION

Tanjung Jabung Timur Regency, like many regions in Indonesia, has great potential but is often limited by limited human resources. Teachers as agents of educational change have a crucial role in improving Participants' English language competence, which in turn will open their access to wider scholarship opportunities (Anggraini et al., 2023).

Unfortunately, there are still obstacles in providing training and resources for teachers in this region. Many teachers may have the desire to improve their abilities, but limited access to and knowledge of relevant training programs is an obstacle. This can result in a gap between

the need for English language competency and the teacher's ability to provide effective learning (Ningsih, 2019).

Therefore, the service team consisting of educators and English language experts felt the need to provide support to teachers in Tanjung Jabung Timur Regency. Organizing training in the form of a TOEFL program is one of the strategic steps to improve their English language skills. TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) is internationally recognized as one of the standards for measuring non-native English language proficiency. Integrating TOEFL preparation in the teacher training curriculum will help them understand the demands of the test, work strategies, and deepen their overall understanding of English material.

Through this program, it is hoped that teachers in Tanjung Jabung Timur Regency can gain a deeper understanding of Participants' needs in facing English tests, as well as effective teaching strategies to prepare them. In this way, not only will Participants' English language skills increase, but also their chances of getting scholarships that will provide wider access to quality education (Ellyawati et al., 2021).

In addition, by increasing the number of Participants who are able to fulfill TOEFL requirements, it is hoped that there will be a wider positive impact, such as increasing overall academic achievement, increasing social mobility, and greater contributions to regional development.

In this context, this team's service is not only aimed at improving the abilities of individual teachers, but also to strengthen the educational infrastructure in Tanjung Jabung Timur Regency as a whole. In this way, human resource development in this area can run sustainably and make a greater positive contribution to the progress of the region and the nation as a whole.

The focus of this service will be focused on developing a TOEFL training program for teachers in Tanjung Jabung Timur Regency. This program will be designed to provide an in-depth understanding of the TOEFL test, working strategies, and mastery of relevant English language material (Sudira, 2009). Apart from that, training will also be provided on how to integrate TOEFL preparation into the existing learning curriculum.

The service team will work closely with educational institutions and local governments to identify teacher needs and develop appropriate training programs. This training will be held periodically and continuously, so that teachers have the opportunity to continue to improve their abilities in preparing Participants for the TOEFL test (Ilham et al., 2022).

Apart from that, a monitoring and evaluation system will also be built to measure the effectiveness of this program in improving teacher abilities and student learning outcomes. The data collected from this evaluation will be used to make improvements and adjustments to the training program so that it can provide maximum impact.

In its implementation, the service team will also involve various parties, including English language experts, school administrators, and other related parties, to ensure the success of this program (Kartikawati et al., 2014). It is hoped that this cross-sector collaboration can optimize available resources and expand the positive impact of the TOEFL training program for teachers and Participants in Tanjung Jabung Timur Regency.

By focusing on developing a holistic and sustainable TOEFL training program, it is hoped that teachers in Tanjung Jabung Timur Regency can become effective agents of change in improving Participants' English language competency and preparing them for scholarship

requirements that require certification of English language skills.

The aim of this service is to improve teachers' abilities in preparing Participants' English language competency through the TOEFL training program, with the ultimate goal of expanding their access to scholarship opportunities in Tanjung Jabung Timur Regency. Here are some specific goals to achieve:

The main goal of this program is to increase teachers' understanding of the structure, requirements, and TOEFL scores. With a deeper understanding of this test, teachers will be able to provide more effective guidance to Participants in preparing for the test.

Through this training, the aim is to improve teachers' abilities in delivering English material in an interesting and effective way. This includes more in-depth mastery of the material, the use of innovative teaching methods, and the integration of learning strategies that are appropriate to TOEFL preparation.

This program also aims to increase teacher awareness of the importance of English language proficiency certification, especially in the context of preparing for scholarship requirements. A better understanding of the benefits and relevance of English language certification will hopefully increase teachers' motivation to help their Participants reach the required level of proficiency.

The ultimate goal of this program is to increase student access in Tanjung Jabung Timur Regency to scholarship opportunities that require English language proficiency certification, such as TOEFL. With better preparation and improved English language skills, it is hoped that new opportunities will open up for Participants to continue their education to a higher level (Dewi et al., 2023).

Apart from objectives directly related to improving the abilities of teachers and Participants, this program also aims to build a strong collaborative network between various related parties, including educational institutions, regional governments and local communities. With good cooperation, it is hoped that this program can run smoothly and have a significant impact on education in Tanjung Jabung Timur Regency.

By achieving these goals, it is hoped that this service program can make a meaningful contribution in improving the quality of English education and expanding student access to better educational opportunities in Tanjung Jabung Timur Regency.

IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

The Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach focuses on identifying and leveraging the existing resources within a community to bring about desired changes (Afandi et al., 2022). This methodology emphasizes community strengths rather than deficiencies, fostering sustainable development and local empowerment. Implementing ABCD in the context of a TOEFL training program for teachers in Tanjung Jabung Timur Regency involves the following stages:

Community Asset Mapping: Identifying and Assessing Resources

The first step involves conducting a thorough analysis to identify the resources and assets present within the community. This includes mapping the skills, knowledge, and experiences of teachers, available educational facilities, and support from educational

institutions, local government, and other stakeholders. Teachers' prior experiences with English language learning and their familiarity with international tests such as TOEFL are crucial components of this asset mapping process.

Data collection will be carried out using a combination of methods, including interviews, focus group discussions, and direct observations. These methods will enable the team to gather qualitative and quantitative information about the existing resources and the potential for collaboration. For instance, identifying teachers with prior experience in TOEFL preparation or access to resources like libraries, language labs, and internet facilities will help tailor the training program.

Analyzing Community Potential

The gathered data will be analyzed to highlight areas of strength and opportunities for growth. This stage will also identify potential challenges, such as limited technological infrastructure or gaps in teachers' English proficiency, that need to be addressed during program implementation.

Engaging and Collaborating with Stakeholders

The program will actively involve stakeholders, including educational institutions, local government bodies, non-governmental organizations, and private sector representatives. These partnerships are critical for mobilizing resources, securing funding, and ensuring the program's sustainability.

Collaboration will be facilitated through regular meetings, workshops, and networking events. The aim is to create a shared vision for the TOEFL training program and establish clear roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders. For example, local government bodies may provide logistical support, while educational institutions may offer venues and materials for the training sessions.

By leveraging existing networks and creating new connections, the program can broaden its reach and impact. Collaboration with external organizations, such as universities or English language training centers, may provide additional expertise and resources for the program.

Designing a Resource-Based Program

The program's design will be informed by the asset mapping and stakeholder collaboration processes. It will focus on utilizing community strengths to develop a practical and context-specific TOEFL training curriculum. For instance, teachers with advanced English proficiency may serve as peer mentors, while schools with better facilities can host training sessions.

The program will aim to:

- Enhance teachers' English language skills and familiarity with the TOEFL format.
- Build confidence among teachers to prepare for the TOEFL test themselves.
- Enable teachers to guide their Participants effectively in preparing for TOEFL.

Input from teachers and other stakeholders will be integral to the program's design. Regular feedback sessions will ensure that the training activities align with the participants' needs and expectations.

Implementing the Program and Strengthening Capacities

The TOEFL training program will be delivered through a series of interactive sessions, including workshops, direct training, and one-on-one mentoring. The training will cover key areas such as listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills, along with test-taking strategies.

The program will incorporate activities to strengthen teachers' capacities beyond TOEFL preparation. For example:

- **Workshops:** Teachers will participate in workshops on advanced teaching methodologies for English language instruction.
- **Peer Learning:** Teachers will engage in peer-to-peer learning to share best practices and experiences.
- **Mentorship:** Experienced educators will mentor less experienced teachers to build their confidence and skills.

Interactive and participatory methods, such as role-playing, group discussions, and practice tests, will ensure active engagement and improve learning outcomes. Teachers will also have access to digital resources and tools, enhancing their ability to integrate technology into language learning.

Continuous Evaluation and Shared Learning

Evaluation will be a continuous process throughout the program. Tools such as pre-tests and post-tests, surveys, and feedback forms will be used to measure participants' progress and the program's effectiveness. For example, pre- and post-tests based on TOEFL prediction tests will assess improvements in teachers' English proficiency.

The impact of the program will be assessed not only in terms of individual teacher outcomes but also in terms of broader community benefits. For instance, teachers' enhanced skills can lead to better English language instruction for their Participants, creating a ripple effect of improved educational outcomes.

The evaluation findings will be shared with all stakeholders through debriefing sessions, reports, and presentations. This shared learning approach will ensure transparency and encourage collective ownership of the program's outcomes.

Feedback from participants and stakeholders will be used to refine the program. Lessons learned will inform future iterations of the training, ensuring continuous improvement and adaptation to emerging needs.

Anticipated Outcomes and Sustainability

By applying the ABCD approach, the TOEFL training program aims to achieve the following outcomes:

- Improved English proficiency among teachers in Tanjung Jabung Timur Regency.
- Increased teacher confidence in taking the TOEFL test and preparing Participants for it.
- Strengthened community collaboration and resource utilization.

The program's sustainability will be ensured through ongoing stakeholder engagement and capacity-building efforts. By focusing on community assets and fostering local ownership, the program is expected to create lasting benefits for teachers and the broader educational ecosystem in Tanjung Jabung Timur Regency.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The TOEFL training program conducted for teachers in Tanjung Jabung Timur Regency yielded remarkable results, exceeding the expectations set at the outset of the initiative. With the participation of 26 teachers from various schools in the region, the program demonstrated the potential of targeted interventions to enhance the English proficiency and confidence of educators in preparing for internationally recognized tests like the TOEFL. This section highlights the results achieved through the implementation of the program and discusses its broader implications.

Improved Performance in TOEFL Prediction Test

The most notable outcome of the program was the significant improvement in the TOEFL prediction test scores of participants. At the start of the program, a pre-test was conducted to assess the baseline English proficiency of the teachers. The majority of participants scored below 400, indicating limited familiarity with the structure and demands of the TOEFL test. This baseline assessment underscored the need for targeted training to address gaps in their language skills and test strategies.

Following the completion of the training sessions, all participants undertook a post-test using the same TOEFL prediction format. The results revealed substantial progress, with all 26 participants achieving scores in the range of 400 to 460. This improvement not only surpassed the initial average scores but also demonstrated the effectiveness of the program in equipping participants with the necessary skills and strategies to tackle the TOEFL test confidently. The increase in scores reflects advancements across all sections of the test, including listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Participants exhibited a better understanding of grammar, expanded vocabulary, and enhanced comprehension skills. They also developed the ability to manage time effectively during the test, a critical factor in achieving higher scores. The structured and interactive nature of the training sessions, combined with practical exercises and regular feedback, played a pivotal role in these outcomes.

Enhanced Teaching Confidence and Competence

Beyond the numerical improvements in TOEFL scores, the program had a profound impact on the teaching confidence and competence of the participants. Many teachers reported feeling more confident in their ability to teach English and guide their Participants in preparing for similar standardized tests. The workshops on advanced teaching methodologies and the peer-learning activities facilitated an exchange of best practices among participants, fostering a sense of camaraderie and mutual support.

Teachers also gained valuable insights into integrating TOEFL-related content into their existing curricula. This ability to contextualize the learning material ensures that the benefits of the program extend beyond the participants themselves, positively impacting their Participants. For instance, teachers now feel better equipped to design engaging lesson plans that incorporate listening exercises, reading comprehension activities, and writing assignments aligned with the TOEFL format.

Increased Motivation and Aspirations

The program also served as a motivational boost for the participants. Achieving tangible

improvements in their TOEFL scores instilled a sense of accomplishment and encouraged them to set higher aspirations for their professional development. Several participants expressed a renewed interest in pursuing further English language certifications or higher education opportunities that require TOEFL scores. This shift in mindset is a critical step toward fostering a culture of lifelong learning among educators in the region.

The emphasis on the importance of English proficiency in accessing scholarship opportunities and career advancement further reinforced the participants' commitment to self-improvement. The knowledge that their enhanced skills could have a direct impact on their Participants' futures added an element of purpose and responsibility to their learning journey.

Strengthened Community Collaboration

The collaborative approach adopted in the program also contributed to its success. The involvement of various stakeholders, including local educational institutions, government bodies, and English language experts, created a supportive ecosystem for the participants. Regular meetings and workshops facilitated knowledge sharing and resource mobilization, ensuring the smooth execution of the program.

The peer mentorship component, where teachers with advanced English skills supported their peers, emerged as a particularly effective strategy. This not only strengthened the bonds among participants but also created a sustainable framework for continued learning and development. The sense of community fostered through these interactions is expected to have a lasting impact, encouraging participants to collaborate on future initiatives aimed at improving education in the region.

Positive Impact on Participants

While the immediate focus of the program was on improving the skills of teachers, the ripple effects on Participants cannot be overlooked. Teachers who are better equipped to deliver effective English instruction are likely to inspire their Participants to pursue language learning with greater enthusiasm and confidence. By incorporating elements of the TOEFL training into their teaching practices, participants can help their Participants build a strong foundation in English, preparing them for academic and professional success.

The program also highlighted the importance of setting achievable goals and celebrating progress, a lesson that participants are expected to pass on to their Participants. By sharing their own learning experiences and successes, teachers can serve as role models, motivating Participants to overcome challenges and strive for excellence.

Evaluation and Feedback

Continuous evaluation and feedback mechanisms were integral to the program's implementation. Participants provided regular input on the training activities, enabling the service team to make adjustments and improvements in real-time. This iterative process ensured that the program remained responsive to the needs of the participants and maximized its impact. Post-program surveys and interviews revealed high levels of satisfaction among participants. Many expressed gratitude for the opportunity to improve their skills and emphasized the value of the training in enhancing their professional capabilities. The feedback also highlighted areas for further improvement, such as the need for additional practice sessions and more advanced

training modules for participants who wish to pursue higher-level certifications.

Broader Implications and Sustainability

The success of this program underscores the potential of asset-based approaches in addressing educational challenges in underserved regions. By leveraging the existing strengths of the community and fostering collaboration among stakeholders, the program not only achieved its immediate goals but also laid the groundwork for sustainable development.

The improvements in participants' English proficiency and teaching competence are expected to have a cascading effect, benefiting Participants and the broader educational ecosystem in Tanjung Jabung Timur Regency. The program also demonstrated the importance of addressing psychological barriers, such as fear and self-doubt, in enabling individuals to reach their full potential.

To ensure the sustainability of these outcomes, the service team plans to establish a follow-up program that includes advanced training sessions, regular peer-learning activities, and continuous support for participants. By maintaining the momentum generated through this initiative, it is hoped that the positive impact will continue to grow, contributing to the long-term development of human resources in the region.

CONCLUSION

The TOEFL training which was held using the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach succeeded in making a significant contribution in improving the English language skills of the participating teachers. With a total of 26 participants from various schools, this program is a strategic step in supporting improving the quality of education in Tanjung Jabung Timur Regency. Based on the evaluation results, all participants showed significant improvement in English language skills, especially in understanding the structure of the TOEFL test, working strategies, as well as mastery of listening, reading, writing and speaking skills.

Before the training begins, participants undergo an initial test or pre-test to measure their initial abilities in facing the TOEFL test. The pre-test results show that the average participant has a score that is still far from the TOEFL Prediction passing standard, with scores ranging from 300 to 370. This indicates an urgent need to improve their understanding of the material tested in TOEFL as well as work strategies. questions effectively.

Through a series of systematically designed training, participants began to show progress in each session. This training includes interactive teaching methods, group discussions, test simulations, and mentoring sessions guided by English language experts. Apart from that, participants are also given access to digital learning resources that support independent learning, such as practice modules, video tutorials and TOEFL practice applications. This approach has proven effective in helping participants improve their skills gradually.

At the end of the program, participants take a final test or post-test using TOEFL Prediction to measure their achievements during the training. The post-test results showed a significant improvement compared to the pre-test. A total of 26 participants successfully obtained TOEFL Prediction certificates with scores ranging from 400 to 460. This increase

reflects the program's success in helping participants understand the TOEFL test format, master working strategies, and improve their overall English language skills.

Another positive impact felt by participants was an increase in self-confidence in facing the TOEFL test, both for personal purposes and as a scholarship requirement. In addition, participants also gain a better understanding of how to integrate TOEFL-based learning into their teaching process. Thus, the benefits of this program are not only felt by individual participants, but also have an impact on the Participants they teach.

This program has also succeeded in building strong collaboration between various parties, including educational institutions, regional governments and local communities. Through this collaboration, TOEFL training can be carried out with the support of adequate facilities, sufficient funding, and active participation from various parties. This collaboration is an important foundation to ensure the program's sustainability in the future.

In conclusion, the TOEFL training program for teachers in Tanjung Jabung Timur Regency succeeded in achieving its main objective, namely improving the English language skills of teachers and preparing them to face the TOEFL test better. Apart from that, this program also has a positive long-term impact on the quality of education in this region. By increasing teachers' English competency, it is hoped that they can become more effective agents of change in helping Participants achieve better educational opportunities through scholarships or other programs that require English language skills.

REFERENCES

- Afandi, A., Laily, N., Wahyudi, N., Umam, M. H., Kambau, R. A., Rahman, S. A., Sudirman, M., Jamilah, Kadir, N. A., Junaid, S., Nur, S., Ayu, R. D., Parmitasari, Nurdiyanah, Wahyudi, J., & Wahid, M. (2022). Metodologi Pengabdian Masyarakat. In *Вестник Росздрава* (1st ed., Vol. 4, Issue 1).
- Anggraini, H. W., Zuraida, Hayati, R., Maharrani, D., & Pitaloka, N. L. (2023). Pembelajaran TOEFL sebagai upaya peningkatan kompetensi guru di MGMP Kabupaten Muara Enim. *ABSYARA: Jurnal Pengabdian Pada Masyarakat*, 4(1), 38–46. <https://doi.org/10.29408/ab.v4i1.18275>
- Dewi, D. S., Wilany, E., & Saputro, S. I. M. (2023). *Jurnal Awam Vol 3 No 1 Juni 2023 PELATIHAN TOEFL iBT BAGI GURU BAHASA INGGRIS SMK*. 3(1), 6–12.
- Ellyawati, H. C., Handayani, T., & Nugroho, A. (2021). Pengenalan TOEFL Untuk Guru SMA AL-ISLAM Semarang. *DIMASTIK: Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat*, 1(1), 45–52.
- Ilham, Isnaini, Y., Irwandi, Lukman, & Ismail, H. (2022). Pelatihan TOEFL (Test of English as Foreign Language) bagi Guru-Guru Pesantren. *Journal of Character Education Society*, 5(3), 715–725. <http://journal.ummat.ac.id/index.php/JCES><https://doi.org/10.31764/jces.v3i1.9228><https://doi.org/10.31764/jces.v3i1.XXX>
- Kartikawati, D., Fitriningtyas, A., & Frisdiana, W. I. (2014). Peningkatan Kemampuan TOEFL Bagi Guru-Guru SMA di Kabupaten Tulungagung. *J-ADIMAS (Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat)*, 2(1), 10–13.

- Ningsih, N. (2019). Aplikasi Teori Belajar Konstruktivisme Dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Asing. *Foundasia*, 9(1), 43–54. <https://doi.org/10.21831/foundasia.v9i1.26159>
- Sudira, P. (2009). *Tujuh Prinsip Dasar Pendekatan Pembelajaran Berbasis Kompetensi*. 1–9.