

The Efficiency of The Training Programme in Test-Takers Scoring Who Participate in Preparation TOEFL Test Course Held in Staff Development Centre

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Abstract

This paper aims at measuring the effectiveness of the (Preparation for TOEFL Test Training programme) conducted by Staff Development Centre on the participants' achievement in the post – test at the end of the programme . Two groups have been selected for this purpose (experimental and control group) containing (15) participants each . The experimental group was taught by using computer assisted instruction in special lecture room provided with LCD screen (clear sound , clear pictures) with special TOEFL CDs and books from local market and other designed by the staff of the center to reinforce the learning process . The second group was taught using the traditional method (cassettes , board) . The programme for each group lasted (4) weeks . The participants in both groups subjected to a post–test which is the same for both using the statistical analysis T-test .

The results showed the achievement of experimental group in post–test was much better than the other group . The paper concludes that the teaching methods applications and using modern techniques and various audio – visual aids can highly improve the efficiency of the programme and it also recommends that CDs and computer-assisted language learning should be incorporated into the regular classes, rather than scheduling them separately. The paper came out with some recommendations in this respect .

The Objectives of the Research :

1. To improve training programmes for preparation TOEFL test courses trainees that are held in Staff Development Centre (SDC).
2. To assess the efficiency of using modern application on preparation TOEFL test courses trainees .
3. To measure the performance improvement on the score of the participants in pre and post–tests .

The Hypothesis :

There is no compared statistical significant above (0.05) level between trainees scores average of the experimental sample group (who are taught by

using CDs as teaching method) with the control group who are taught with the old traditional methods) in the post-test .

Research limits:

The limits of the research is :

1. Trainees who are university teacher staff in Foundation of Technical Education and Iraqi universities , have participate in preparation TOEFL test course in Staff Development Centre during the period May ,4 - 29 2008 . Their certificates range between Bachelors degree of miscellanies specializations . their ages are varied between 26- 46 years old males and females . The trainees were randomly assigned to the experimental and control groups (15 member each)using a table of random numbers.
2. The research is done during the academic year 2007/2008 .

Definitions of Keys Words :

- 1- *Staff Development Centre* : It is entrusted with the task of running , preparation and development of programmes for the teaching , training and administrative staff working mainly for Foundation of Technical Education . It is also concerned with the development of human resources to improve their performances in order to enable them to deal efficiently with the society of knowledge . The centre has now become a specialized training centre capable of providing consultations and implementing training programmes to regional , governmental and private sectors in all fields of knowledge.
- 2- *The Preparation TOEFL Test Courses* : This course is organized and conducted in Staff Development Centre since 2004 that range 3-4 times a year . The period of the course lasts four weeks . The classes is done for four days a week , and four hours a day . Each aspect of the exam (listening , structure , reading and writing comprehension) covers a week period of the training course to give the trainees a good time to understand the subject well. The materials are taken form various sources of updated books that explain the procedures and the materials the trainees should do with examples of the exam .
- 3- *Pre-test* : it is a test that is conducted before the beginning of the preparation TOEFL training course in order to diagnose the capabilities of each trainee enrolls the course in every aspect of the TOEFL exam ; listening , structure , reading and writing comprehension .Usually , the exam is similar to the international exam since it is taken from old exams of the TOEFL . Assimilation to real environment of test taking is performed to give the trainees an actual image of he/she should do if conducting the exam later .
- 4- *Post-Test* : at the end of every course an exam is conducted assimilates the real one that is done in the official centers of TOEFL test when the trainees

are capable enough to know how to answer the questions correctly . The objective of this test is to know how much the trainees have learnt form the course .

Introduction :

The definition of TOEFL is **Test of English as a Foreign Language** (pronounced "toe-full" or sometimes "toffle" . It evaluates the potential success of an individual to use and understand American English at a college level¹ . Taking the TOEFL is necessary step for any non-US and non-native English speaker educated student or applicant who wants to study at a North American university . It is increasingly required from educational institutions throughout the world as well as a desired or mandatory job qualification .² A TOEFL score is valid for two years and then is deleted from the official database.

The TOEFL test is a registered trademark of Educational Testing Service (ETS) and is administered worldwide . The test was first administered in 1963 and has since been taken by nearly 20 million students³ or applicants .Almost one million students from 180 countries register to take the exam every year . Some of them do not score well because they not understand the examination .⁴

The TOEFL test has come under increasing scrutiny as a measure of the ability to use English language effectively . There is an increasing number of major English speaking universities that now only accept alternate tests or their own test as a measure of whether a student will be capable of using English language in an academic milieu .⁵

The demand for test seats remains very high even after almost a year after the introduction of the test ; Candidates have to wait for months since short – term test dates are fully booked . The four – hour test consists of four sections , each measuring mainly one of the basic language skills (although some tasks may require multiple skills) and focusing on language used in an academic , higher – education environment .⁶

Since the beginning , The exam is performed on paper . On September 24,2006 the exam was launched on the Internet (IBT: Internet –Based TOEFL) in the United States . The following month , it was administrated in Canada , Germany , Italy and France . The IBT is being introduced throughout the world in phases during 2006 .⁷

1- Listening

This section of the TOEFL test is always given first . The purpose of this exam is to test student's understanding of spoken English .

The directions for this section are given on the tape as well as printed in the text book . There are four speakers , two men and two women . The speakers read the items at a normal speed . All the four have standard North American

accents . The tone of the items in the two other test sections .

Section I is divided into two parts . Part A consists of short dialogues with one question about each one . Part B consists of three types of longer listening stimuli with sets of multiple questions following them . Questions refer to the content and intent of the phrases , as well as to the speakers' attitude and meaning , either in short or long conversation .

The listening section is actually tests both the listening and reading skills of the examinee . ⁸

2- Structure

Questions deal with English grammar and usage . There are two types of questions in this section of the test : sentence completion and Error Identification . On the paper-based test, these two types of items were presented in separated parts of the section , but on the computer version , the two types of items are intermingled .

There are 20- 25 items in this section , and the time limit is from 15 – 20 minutes . this section is less stressful than section one because it is not necessary to divide student's attention between the spoken material and the information on the screen . Moreover it is easier to finish all the items in the amount of time allotted . ⁹

Structure sentences are generally about academic subjects ; physic sciences (such as astrology or geology), social sciences (such as anthropology or economics or history) , or humanities (such as music or art), also controversial subject like abortion , illegal drugs or sensitive political issues. Any cultural references in the sentences are related to the culture of the United State or Canada . Many references on people , places and institutions that is connected to North America and the foreign student is not familiar with n. So , it is not necessary to know these information . It is simple to concentrate with structure issues . Besides , it is not necessary to understand every vocabulary in the sentence : It is often can answer the a question correctly without a complete understanding of the sentence . ¹⁰

2-a -Sentence completion :- It is an incomplete sentence ; some portion of the sentences has been replaced by a blank . Under the sentence , four words or phrases are listed . One of these complete the sentence grammatically and logically .

2-b- Error Identification :- This type of section consists of a sentence in which four expressions - single words or two, or three phrases –are underlined . Student's job is to identify which of these phrases must not be written in order to form the sentence correctly . All the errors involve grammar or usage – never punctuation or spelling .

3- Reading comprehension

This test exams the ability to understand reading passages like those in

college textbooks . In this section , there is 4-5 passages . After each academic passage , 12-14 questions are posted about content , intent of the author , and ideas inferred from the passage for a total 50-60 questions in this part . The passage vary in length from about 250 - 350 words . And, Time of this exam varies according to the length of the passages .

This section of the exam tests the ability of the student the main idea , supporting ideas , and details ; use context clues to understand the meaning of vocabulary, draw inference , recognize coherence ; figure out the organization of the passage , and perform other basic reading skills .

The passage covers a wide rang of topics but in general , they are classified as science and technology (includes astronomy, geology , mathematics , zoology , medicine , and so on) , North America History , government geography and culture, art, social science (includes physiology , urban studies , sociology , and so on) , and biography . Although the passages deals with various topics , the style in which they are written are similar , and they usually follow fairly simple patterns of organization .¹¹

The vocabularies that are used in this portion of section is fairly sophisticated . there are almost certainly words that student does not recognizes . Sometimes he/she can guess the meaning of these words by context . However , it is not necessary to understand all the vocabularies in the passages in order to understand the questions. Actually this is the longest section and some people find it difficult .

4- Writing comprehension

One task requires from test takers to defend a position relative to a specified general topic . This part tests the ability of applicant to write essays in English similar to those that would be written in college courses. The integrated essay asks for the response to an academic reading passage and a lecture on the same topic . Notes can be taken during this section ,but they are not graded. The time of this section is 30 minutes to plan , write and revise his/her response .Typically , a good essay for the integrated topic will require to write 300-350 words .¹²

On the computer – based test , the essay writing section is a **MANATORY** (required 0 section of every test. This section (previously called the test of Written English, or the TWE) is given after the three multiple choice sections of the test . The writing section differs from the rest of the TOEFL test in that it is **productive** . Instead of choosing one of four choices , the student write his/her answer with pencil and paper or word-process (type) it on computer .¹³

The Essay section consists of a single topic called **prompt** . All of the prompts are very general . They do not require any special knowledge , and they are not about any controversial issues.

Some common context for essay writing prompts are : education , business ,

the future , technology , travel , family friendship , sports , entertainment , communication and transportation .

The score of this section is based on a scale of 1 to 6: half –point score (5.5 , 4.5 and so on) are also given .¹⁴

Many previous studies were conducted to improve language teaching in academies such as Lambacher who had used software designed for pronunciation training in teaching English to forty primary school Japanese learners , resulted in the improved perception and production of English consonants which they were able to review as many times as they wished , getting immediate feedback¹⁵. Dunkel (1987) stated that “Many of the researches conducting literature reviews and meta-analyses in the 1960s and 70s were forced to conclude that there was no discernible cause-and-effect relationship between pupil learning”¹⁶. He also added that the results were questionable in terms of the other fields such as social sciences since these studies were mostly related to mathematics. Kulik and Kulik (1991) surveyed more than 500 studies which compared learners who received computer – assisted instruction with the learners who received traditional instruction. They found that learners tend to learn more and in less time with computer-assisted learning.¹⁷ Scientists ,like Pawling , have found that CDs is potentially a liberating instrument for teachers and learners alike in that they have the special facility of incorporating practice in all four language skills mentioned above in a multimedia package using video, text, photograph and sound. There is much evidence; not least teachers’ own experience, to suggest that computer-based learning is very motivating for children.¹⁸

The Procedure:

Two separated lecturing rooms were chosen for this study ; the first one was regular equipped with board and cassette recorder to train the control group. As for the experimental group , they were taught in a special room equipped with special TOEFL CDs and books from local market and other designed by staff of the center to reinforce the learning process . Both groups have the pre-test before starting the teaching and training process for the TOEFL coarse . At the end of the two training courses , the participants had been given a post-test in both groups (the same materials of the examination). The same instructors met the two groups simultaneously .The instructors have long history of teaching English languages and in teaching TOEFL subjects that they have the ability to use modern advance techniques in teaching . Moreover , they have the ability to create new teaching method in order to facilitate understandings.

Results

1. Hereunder the table that shows the comparison between the results of post-test for both groups which is the target of this study .

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Group	Sample	Ranking Group	(T)Value		Level of Significant	Significant
			Calculated	Scheduled		
Experimental	15	303.5	34.5	0.56	0.01	function
Control	15	154.5	183.3			

The results were analysed in both pre and post tests for both groups ; control and experimental . This table shows that the minimum calculated value of (T) equals (39.2) which minimise the value of (T) at the significant (0.01) is (56) . The nil hypothesis is rejected , and instead the alternative hypothesis is accepted which states that :

There is a different at the significant level (0.01) in favour of the experimental group . This indicates that the use of modern techniques and audio – visual aids in TOEFL training courses leads to more understanding of the various parts of the course , and consequently improve the participant achievement in the post-test .

The table shows the minimum and maximum scheduled value of (T) for the cognitive achievement post-test for the two groups (experimental and control).

2. In using the percentage , it is found that the result of the pre-test for both groups was very close which indicates that the participants have almost the same background in English language .
3. It is observed that there is improvement in the performance of both groups in the post-test in comparison with the pre-test , but the improvement of the control group was very little while the experimental sample shows the improvement obvious .

Conclusion

1. This study is focusing on evaluating the feasibility and effectiveness of a CDs and computer-assisted language learning as a tool for research-based . It can be concluded that CDs potentially is a liberating instrument for teachers and learners alike in TOEFL courses .In that, it has the special facility of incorporating practice in all language skills in a multimedia package using video , text, photograph and sound . There is much evidence to suggest that computer-based learning is very motivating and they were comfortable in using these modern tools because they can communicate internationally.
2. This study also showed that CDs and computer-assisted language learning enhanced learner performance and skills considerably in their studies . The learners' attitudes toward this teaching method can show promising findings to keep on using them .In addition to use New types of exercises .
3. The reason for getting the superior position in the experimental group which has studied by using modern methods for the TOEFL test due to the way of

delivering the material logically from easy to the difficult , the teachers had followed a consequent cohesive steps to achieve the goal of the study and continuous use of CDs and computer-assisted language learning increases the desire of the participants to absorb the materials with anxiety in a short period of time .

4. Traditional methods of teaching lead to arise boredom in the participants which would not increase improvement of their performance .

Recommendations :-

1. Using modern methods (audio – visual aids) in lecturing the participants with every important details of the four sections (listening , structure , reading and writing).
2. Giving the participants as much as drills about TOEFL exercise to improve their skills in case of taking the exam .
3. It is better to conduct a pre-test at the beginning of each training course ,then another one in the middle of course and a post-test at the end of the course . All these courses should be resemble to the same slandered of the international TOEFL test in parts , time and organisation .
4. Currently updating the programme's syllabus in accordance with what is really existed and published materials about TOEFL exam as adopted in world wide .

Notes :-

- 1- Wikipedia , The free encyclopaedia , 30/4/2007 , p. 1
- 2- Kenneth Beare ; mhtml:file://c:/Documents and Settings / Rebuilding/ My Documents / SUHA/ Free TOFEL , 30/04/2007, p.1
- 3- Wikipedia , p.1
- 4- Pamela J. Sharpe, Ph.D. **How to prepare for The TOEFL IBT** (United States of America , Barron's Educational Series, inc , 2006)12th edition, p.10
- 5- Wikipedia,p.3
- 6- *Ibid*,p.1
- 7- Sharpe , p.10
- 8- Bruce Rogers , **TOFEL CDT Success** (United States of America , Thomson / Peterson's, 2004) p.10
- 9- *Ibid* , p.76
- 10- *Ibid*
- 11- *Ibid*
- 12- Sharpe, p.404
- 13- Rogers , p.258
- 14- *Ibid* ,P.261
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- 16- Dunkel, P. A. (1987). Computer-assisted instruction (CAI) and computer-assisted language learning (CALL): Past dilemmas and future prospects for audible CALL. *The Modern Language Journal*, 71 (3),p. 257.
- 17- Kulik, C. L., & Kulik, J. A. (1991). Effectiveness of computer-assisted instruction: An updated analysis. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 7, p.82 .
- 18- Pawling, E. (1999). Modern languages and CD-ROM based learning. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 30 (2), p.164
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فاعلية البرنامج التدريبي في تحصيل المشاركين في الدورات التأهيلية لاداء امتحان التوفل في مركز تطوير الملاكات

الخلاصة

تهدف هذه الدراسة لقياس تأثير البرنامج التدريبي التأهيلي لاداء اختبار التوفل الذي نفذ من قبل مركز تطوير الملاكات على نتائج المشاركين في الاختبار البعدي عند انتهاء البرنامج ، حيث تم اختيار مجموعتين لهذا الغرض (المجموعة التجريبية و مجموعة السيطرة) وتحتوي كل مجموعة على (25) مشارك ، وقد تم تعليم المجموعة التجريبية باستخدام برامج مساعدة بالحاسوب في قاعة محاضرات خاصة ذات شاشة العرض المسطحة (الصوت والصورة واضحتان) مع اقراص ليزيرية مضغوطة خاصة بامتحان التوفل وكتب من الاسواق المحلية والاخري برامج صممت من قبل منتسبي المركز لتعزيز عملية التعلم ، أما المجموعة الثانية فقد تم تعليمها باستخدام الطرق التقليدية (أشرطة المسجل والسيبورة) وقد استمر البرنامج التدريبي لمدة اربعة اسابيع وخضع المشاركون من كلتا المجموعتين بالاختبار البعدي ذاته واستخدم التحليل الاحصائي اختبار T .

وقد اظهرت النتائج بأن نتائج المجموعة التجريبية في الاختبار البعدي كان افضل من المجموعة الاخرى واطهرت هذه الدراسة بأن أساليب التعليم المطبقة و استخدام الوسائل البصرية والسمعية المساعدة يمكن أن تحسن كفاءة البرنامج وتوصي الدراسة باستخدام الاقراص الليزرية المضغوطة وبرامج تعليم اللغة المساعدة بالتعاون مع الدروس التقليدية افضل من استخدامها بشكل منفصل .في ضوء هذه النتائج خرجت هذه الدراسة ببعض التوصيات.