

The Difficulties Faced by Advanced Iraqi Foreign Learners in Passing ITP TOEFL Test

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Abstract

The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is a standardized test recognized worldwide. It is used to measure the ability to understand English, to recognize selected structural and grammatical points in standard written English, and to read short passages as those used in north American colleges and universities. It includes different types of tests such as (Computer-Based), (Paper-Based), (Internet-Based) and (Institutional Testing) Programs. The present research focuses on studying The Institutional Testing Program with more accurate examination and analysis of the difficulties that Iraqi foreign learners face in passing this test which is considered as one of the obligatory requirements to complete higher education studies .

This study consists of two parts: a theoretical part and a practical one. The theoretical part includes several sections with detailed explanations of the TOEFL test and its types especially ITP TOEFL test program which is the main concern of the present study. Concerning the practical part, there is concentration on the difficulties that the students face during the ITP TOEFL test. The study ends with conclusions and recommendations that can help the students face these difficulties and successfully pass the TOEFL test and this is the main goal of the present research.

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1. Introduction

The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is used to measure English language proficiency. It is administered by the Educational Testing Service (ETS). It is administered in more than 180 countries making it the most accessible test in the world (see The Official Guide to the New TOEFL (iBT), 2006:1). It includes several types such as Paper- Based, Computer-Based, Internet-Based and Institutional Testing Program (ITP) which is the main concern of the present study.

The Institutional Testing Program (ITP) is designed to evaluate the English language skills of non-native English speakers. It has been presented since 1965 (see ETS TOEFL ITP (2005:2-4)). It includes 140 multiple-choice questions that evaluate the skills of the test-takers in Listening Comprehension, Reading Comprehension , and Structure and Written Expressions. In the present study, there is an attempt to focus on the difficulties that the students face during this test which is one of the requirements of higher studies. Moreover, the study aims at finding the appropriate suggestions that can help the students achieve an adequate score and pass this test successfully.

1.1 What is the TOEFL Test?

TOEFL is the Test of English as a Foreign Language. This test is administered by the Educational Testing Service (ETS). It is used to measure a non –native English speaker's proficiency in the English language (Gear and Robert, 2002:1). Moreover, it is the most accepted test in the world. It seems that more than 5000 colleges, universities, and licensing agencies in 90 countries accept TOEFL scores. Consequently, students need to pass the test in order to study in the United Kingdom and other European countries, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, Canada and the United States (see The Official Guide to the New TOEFL (iBT), 2006:1).

In ETS TOEFL ITP (2005:4), it is mentioned that TOEFL is a standardized test adopted throughout the world. It is used to evaluate the non –native ability to

understand English as it is spoken in North America, to recognize selected structural and grammatical sentences in standard written English, and to read short passages that are similar to those that students encounter in North American colleges and universities. Actually, the TOEFL test is available in two ways as shown below:

- International Testing Program:
TOEFL CBT (computer- based)
TOEFL P&P (paper-based)
- Institutional Testing Program:
Pre- TOEFL (paper-based)
TOEFL ITP (paper-based)

1.2 Registration for the Test

It is important to mention that the registration for the TOEFL Test is obtained by ordering or downloading a copy of the TOEFL information Bulletin from the TOEFL website at (www.toefl.org). Another means is by mailing a request to the following address (Phillips, 2003: xvi):

TOEFL Services
Educational Testing Service
P.O. Box 6151
Princeton, NJ 08541 USA

1.3 The Answer Sheet of the TOEFL Test

During the TOEFL Test, the examinee must not mark his/her answers in the test book. Instead, he will get an answer sheet. In this sheet, he will find one of two different formats, i.e. either horizontal or vertical, as in the following (Gear and Robert, 2002:8):

Horizontal

- 1- (A) (B) (C) (D)
- 2- (A) (B) (C) (D)
- 3- (A) (B) (C) (D)

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Vertical

1	2	3
<input type="radio"/> A	<input type="radio"/> A	<input type="radio"/> A
<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> B
<input type="radio"/> C	<input type="radio"/> C	<input type="radio"/> C
<input type="radio"/> D	<input type="radio"/> D	<input type="radio"/> D

The answer should be as in the following:

- The examinee should find the row with the same number as the number of the question that he will answer.
- The examinee should answer the item by filling in the oval blank corresponding to the letter on the answer sheet because the scoring machine cannot read the light mark or partially filled ovals.
- The examinee should mark only one answer to each question.
- If the examinee changes his mind, he must be sure to erase the old answer completely.
- The examinee should erase all extra marks completely before the end of the test (ibid).

1.4 How is the Test Scored?

The paper version of the TOEFL Test is scored on a scale of 217 to 677 points. Different universities, institutions and organizations have their own TOEFL requirements. Thus, it is better for students to know from each institution, university and organization what TOEFL score is required by them. The dates of the scores to be mailed to the students are listed in the *TOEFL Information Bulletin*. Scores are generally mailed out approximately five to six weeks after the test date for all over test centers (Phillips, 2003: xvi).

2. TOEFL Testing Programs

The official TOEFL Test is currently administered around the world in different types:

1-The Paper-Based TOEFL (PBT)

2-The Computer-Based TOEFL (CBT)

3-The Internet-Based TOEFL (IBT)

4-Institutional Testing Program (ITP)

2.1 What is the Paper-Based TOEFL Testing Program (PBT)?

The Paper Based Test is one of the International Testing Programs. It includes four sections which are as follows (Phillips, 2003: xv-xvi):

1-Listening comprehension

It is used to evaluate the examinees' ability to understand spoken English. The examinees must listen to different types of recorded passages and answer multiple choice questions about these passages.

2-Structure and Written Expression

It is used to evaluate the examinees' ability to recognize grammatically correct English sentences. In this section, they have to choose the correct way to complete sentences and to identify grammatical errors in sentences.

3-Reading comprehension

It is used to measure the examinees' ability to understand written English passages. Then, the examinees must answer multiple choice questions concerning the ideas and the meaning of words in those reading passages.

4-Test of Written English (TWE):

It is used to evaluate the examinees' ability to write correct, organized and meaningful English essays. The examinees must write a certain essay on a given topic in only thirty minutes.

The format of these four sections, the number of items for each of them, and the time which is assigned for each of them can be clarified in the following table (Gear and Robert, 2002:8):

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Table (1) The Paper-Based TOEFL Test (PBT) format

Sections	Number of Items	Time
Listening: Part A Questions about short conversations Part B Questions about longer conversations Part C Questions about lectures or talks Total	30 8 12 50	30-40 Minutes
Structure and Written Expression: Completing sentences correctly Identifying errors Total	15 25 40	25 Minutes
Reading comprehension: Questions about reading passages Total	50 50	
Test of Written English (TWE): One essay, 250 -300 words		30 Minutes

2.2 What is the Computer-Based TOEFL Program (CBT)?

The Computer-Based TOEFL Program comprises four sections: Listening, Structure, Writing and Reading. The writing section in this test is equivalent to the Test of Written English (TWE) in the Paper-Based TOEFL Test. In addition, everyone who takes the TOEFL during the same administration may not see or answer the same questions. These questions are selected according to the level of the student's proficiency. In this test, there are three sub –scores : Listening, Structure / Writing, and Reading. Actually, the total score is limited on a scale of (0 – 300) (Sharpe, 2009:11).

The format, the number, and types of questions, that can be seen in the Computer-Based TOEFL Test, are shown in the following table (Gear and Robert, 2002:2) :

Table (2) The Computer-Based TOEFL Test (CBT) format

Listening:	Number of passages	Number of questions per passage	Total number of questions	Time
Short Dialogues	11-17	1	30-59	40-60 Minutes
Short Conversation	2-3	2-3		
Lectures and Discussions	4-6	3-6		
Structure:		Number of items	Total number of questions	Time
Completing sentences correctly		10-15	20-25	15-20 Minutes
Identifying errors		10-15		
Reading Comprehension	Number of passages	Number of questions per passage	Total number of questions	Time
	4-5	10-12	44-55	70-90 Minutes
Writing	Number of essays			Time
	1			30 Minutes

2.3 What is the Internet-Based TOEFL program (iBT)?

In The Official Guide to the New TOEFL (iBT), (2006: 2-5), this test is described as a new version of the TOEFL Test. It is delivered in secure testing centers around the world. It replaces the Computer-Based TOEFL Test and the Paper-Based TOEFL Test. Its main concern is to measure the examinees' ability to communicate successfully in an academic setting. It includes a new section which is the Speaking Section. This section is used to evaluate the examinees' ability to Speak English. Moreover, there are new integrated Writing and Speaking tasks. These tasks are used to evaluate the examinees' ability to combine and communicate information which is

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from different sources. To sum up, this test consists of four sections: Reading, Listening, Speaking and Writing. It tests all the four skills that are influential for effective and successful communication, i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing.

The format of these sections, the number of questions for each of them, and the time which is allotted for each of them can be seen in the following table (ibid: 6):

Table (3) The Internet-Based TOEFL Program (IBT) format

Test Section	Number of Questions	Timing
Reading	3-5 passages, 12-14 questions each	60-100 Minutes
Listening	4-6 lectures, 6 questions each 2-3 conversations, 5 questions each	60-90 Minutes
BREAK		
Speaking	6 tasks: 2 independent and 4 integrated	20 Minutes
Writing	1 integrated task 1 independent task	20 Minutes 30 Minutes

Finally, there is also the Institutional Testing Program (ITP), which is the main concern of the present research that will be explained with more details in the following section.

3. The Institutional Testing Program (ITP)

In The Institutional Testing Program (2005:2), it is clear that ITP Test, i.e. (the Institutional Testing Program) began in 1965 and is still administered throughout the world. Actually, it differs from other TOEFL Test Programs because it gives qualified universities, English language institutes, and other agencies the opportunity to use older forms of International Testing Program paper-based TOEFL Test or the Preliminary Test of English as a Foreign Language (Pre-TOEFL) to their own students using their own facilities and staff and setting their own test dates.

3.1 The Purposes of the ITP Test

At the present time, more than 1200 schools, colleges, universities, and private agencies that participate in and administer the Institutional Testing Program. This test can be used for the following purposes:

- Assigning individuals to English courses at the appropriate level of difficulty.
- Determining proficiency in English at the end of courses of study in English.
- Determining if non –native speakers of English have sufficient command of the language to participate in a study abroad program.
- Providing students an opportunity to become acquainted with the multiple-choice test format.
- Completing a graduation requirement.
- Assessing proficiency of faculty and other professional staff level.

3.2 Registration for the Test

In The Institutional Testing Program (2006:3), it is affirmed that the examinee can download or order an *information and Registration Bulletin* for the test by visiting the Web site at www.ets.org/toefl or by writing to:

Test of English as a Foreign Language
PO Box 6151
Princeton, NJ 08541-6151
USA

As far as Iraq is concerned, in ITP TOEFL AMIDEAST (2011:1), there are certain locations for administering the ITP Test and these are also the same places for registrations:

- Erbil: University of Kurdistan in Hawler UKH on Erbil's 30 meter Street by Al-Sawaf Mosque, opposite Gilkand Family Park.
- Baghdad: Hunting Club (Nadi Al-Said), Al-Amirat Street, Near Syrian Embassy, Baghdad, Iraq.
- Basrah: University of Basrah, Bab Al-Zubair Compound, in the Institute of Live Languages.

Nowadays, there are many ITP TOEFL testing centres opened in Iraq like:

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- University of Basrah Testing Centre \ College of Education\ Garmat Ali
 - Shat Al Arab Testing Centre\ Shat Al Arab University College
- (For more information about other centres see www.mohiq.net)

3.3 The Answer Sheet of the TOEFL Test

In fact, the answer sheet of the ITP Test is similar to the answer sheet of the TOEFL Test mentioned previously in section two of the present research. It contains multiple-choices for each section of the test.

3.4 How is the Test Scored?

In The Institutional Testing Program (2006:18), it is affirmed that the ITP score is considered as a measurement information. Test scores include three section scores and a total score. Each correct answer is counted equally towards the score for each section. The total number of correct answers is counted also and it is called "raw score". Then, the raw score for each section is converted by certain statistical means to a number on a scale. ITP TOEFL section scores are reported as scaled scores that can range within 31-68. In addition, the total scores can range within 310-677. It is important to mention that the scaled score does not refer to the number or the percentage of questions that the examinee answers in a correct way; rather it is an indication of his performance on that section. In order to get the total score, add the scaled scores for each section and multiply by ten third, such as in the following:

$$\begin{array}{rccccccc} & \text{Section 1} & & \text{Section 2} & & \text{Section 3} & & \\ \text{Example:} & 48 & + & 56 & + & 52 & = & 156 \\ & & & (156 \times 10) & \div & 3 & = & 520 \end{array}$$

3.5 The Structure of the Institutional Testing Program

As for The Institutional Testing Program (2006:3), it is mentioned that the purpose of ITP TOEFL Test is to measure English proficiency of people whose native language is not English. In fact, it consists of three sections. Each section contains a multiple-choice format in order to evaluate the ability to understand North American English. It is given in a single session of about two and a half hours to complete it besides completing the admission procedures. These sections are :

1- Listening comprehension:

It is used to evaluate the examinees' ability to understand English as it is spoken in North America.

2- Structure and Written Expression:

It is used to evaluate the examinees' ability to recognize language that is appropriate for standard written English.

3- Reading comprehension:

It is used to evaluate the examinees' ability to read and understand short passages. The format of these sections, the number of questions for each of them, and the time which is given for each of them can be seen in the following table (see TOEFL Practical Tests (2003) :

Table (4) The Institutional Testing Program (ITP) Format

Sections	Number of Items	Time
Listening: Part A Questions about short conversations Part B Questions about longer conversations Part C Questions about lectures or talks Total	30 7 13 50	30-40 Minutes
Structure and Written Expressions: Completing sentences correctly Identifying errors Total	15 25 40	25 Minutes
Reading comprehension: Questions about reading passages Total	50 50	55 Minutes

3.6. ITP TOEFL Sample Questions

In The Institutional Testing Program (2005:5-6), there are certain questions and their directions which are similar to those found in an actual ITP TOEFL test. During the test, the examinees will specify their answers and fill in the spaces on the answer sheet that correspond to the chosen answers, as in the following:

3.6.1 Section 1/ Listening Comprehension

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This section is used to measure the examinees' ability to understand North American spoken English. It contains three parts which are administered by an audio recording (See Table 4). These parts can be seen in the following:

Part A:

In Part A, the examinee will hear short conversations between two persons. After each conversation, the examinee will hear the question about it, and then he/she will read four possible answers. He must select the one best response to the question that he heard. Such a conversation and some questions are shown below (ibid):

Example:

On the recordings, he will hear:

(Woman) *I don't like this painting very much.*

(Man) *Neither do I*

(Narrator) What does the man mean?

In the test book they will read:

(A) He doesn't like the painting either.

(B) He doesn't know how to paint.

(C) He doesn't have any paintings.

(D) He doesn't know what to do.

-The correct choice is (A)

Part B:

In Part B, the examinee will hear longer conversations which are followed by several questions. Then, he will answer in the answer sheet and select the one best answer to each question. Such a conversation and some questions are as follows (ibid: 6-7):

Example:

On the recording, he will hear:

(Narrator) Questions 1: Listen to a conversation about a trip.

(Man) *Are you ready for "The Big Apple"?*

(Woman) *Excuse me?*

- (Man) *You know. New York City. You are going to New York with us, aren't you? I wanted to show everybody around my old neighborhood.*
- (Woman) *Oh ... sure I wouldn't miss it – especially when the tour guide is a native New Yorker.*
- (Man) *I thought we could start at the Museum of Modern Art. Right now there is an exhibit on twentieth-century American painters.*
- (Woman) *Fine with me ... but what were you saying ... a big Apple?*
- (Man) *"The Big Apple." It's a nickname for New York. I think I heard once that it started with jazz musicians in the 20's.*
- (Woman) *Oh.*
- (Man) *Whenever they played a concert in a city they called that city an "apple." In those days, New York was the biggest city in the country so they called it "The Big Apple."*
- (Woman) *Hey I have an idea! Let's go to a jazz club while we're there.*
- (Man) *Sounds good.*

1. On the recording, he will hear:

(Narrator) What is the man planning to see?

In the test book he will read:

- (A) An art exhibit.
- (B) A Broadway play.
- (C) A modern dance production.
- (D) An opera.

-The correct choice is (A)

2. On the recording, he will hear:

(Narrator) What can be inferred about the man?

In the testbook, he will read:

- (A) He is a jazz musician.
- (B) He wants to join the woman's club.
- (C) He is in his twenties.
- (D) He was born in New York.

-The correct choice is (D)

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Part C:

In Part C, the examinee will hear several talks which are followed by certain questions. Then, he will select the one best answer to each question. Such a conversation and some questions is given below (ibid: 7-8):

Example:

On the recording, he will hear:

(Narrator) Listen to an instructor's talk to his class about television program.

(Man) *I'd like to tell you about an interesting TV program that will be shown this coming Thursday. It'll be from 9 to 10 pm on Channel 4. It is part of a series called "Mysteries of Human Biology." The subject of the program is the human brain, how it functions and how it can malfunction. Topics that will be covered are dreams, memory, and depression. These topics are illustrated with outstanding computer animation that makes the explanations easy to follow make on effort to see this show. Since we've been studying the nervous system in class, I know you'll find it very helpful.*

1. On the recording, he will hear:

(Narrator) What is the main purpose of the program?

In the test book he will read:

- (A) To demonstrate the latest use of computer graphics.
- (B) To discuss the possibility of an economic depression.
- (C) To explain the working of the brain.
- (D) To dramatize a famous mystery story.

-The correct choice is (C)

2. On the recording, he will hear:

(Narrator) Why does he recommend watching the program?

In the test book, he will read:

- (A) It is required of all science majors
- (B) It will never be shown again.
- (C) It can help viewers improve their memory skills.
- (D) It helps with course work.

-The correct choice is (D)

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must select the one best answer to each question (See Table 4). Such a conversation and some questions can be seen in the following (ibid: 9-10):

Sample passage and questions:

The railroad was not the first institution to impose regularly on society, or to draw attention to the importance of precise timekeeping. For as long as merchants have set out their wares daybreak and
Line (5) communal festivities have been celebrated, people have been in rough agreement with their neighbors as to the time of day. The value of this tradition is today more apparent than ever. Were it not for public acceptance of a single yardstick of time, social life would be unbearable chaotic: the massive
(10) daily transfers of goods, services, and information Would proceed in fits and starts; the very fabric of modern society would begin to unravel.

Example 1:

What is the main idea of the passage?

- (A) In modern society we must make more time for our neighbors.
- (B) The traditions of society are timeless.
- (C) An accepted way of measuring time is essential for the smooth functioning of society.
- (D) Society judges people by times at which they conduct certain activities.

-The correct choice is (C)

Example 2:

In line 6, the phrase "this tradition" refers to

- (A) The practice of starting the business day at dawn.
- (B) Friendly relations between neighbors.
- (C) The railroad's reliance on time schedules.
- (D) People agreement on the measurement of time.

-The correct choice is (D)

4. Analysis and Results

As far as the practical part is concerned, the present research is based on a questionnaire regarding the difficulties that the students may face during the TOEFL test (See the Appendix at the end of the research). This questionnaire considers the difficulties of each section in the TOEFL test and each part of these sections. Moreover, it deals with the time allotted for the whole test and the use of suitable materials to practice the test. It also deals with whether the students have taken certain courses before the test or not.

This questionnaire is presented to 60 subjects of different post –graduate students and of different specializations. In addition, the test is conducted in different TOEFL test centers. It is given to them after they have taken the TOEFL test so as to make sure that they are familiar with such test so they can fairly judge whether they face certain difficulties during the test or not.

In the listening comprehension section, the results show that part C is very difficult (73%) (See Table (5) and Figure (1)). It is more difficult than part A (53%), but if we compare part C with part B (70%), we can find that they are nearly similar in difficulty. This means that part B and part C are very difficult for the students to be recognized. Anyone notices that can find out that most students are used to listen to short conversations rather than to long ones. Students might understand a long conversation but they cannot keep tracking the sequence of the events of that conversation.

Table (5) The Difficulty Students Face in Listening Comprehension with Percentages

Parts	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage
Part A	32	53%	28	47%
Part B	42	70%	18	30%
Part C	44	73%	16	27%

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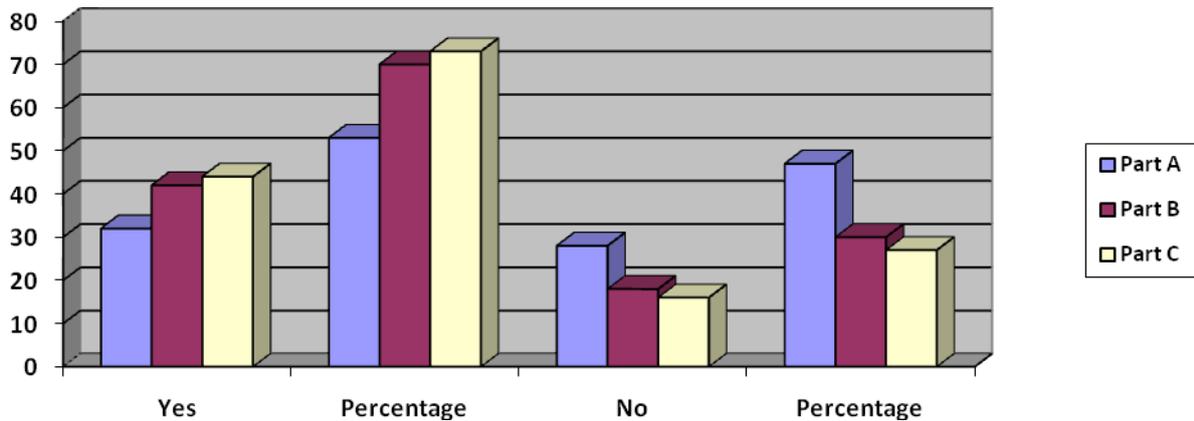


Figure (1) The Difficulty Students Face in Listening Comprehension with Percentages

The most difficult part in the listening comprehension section is part C (58%) while part A is 30% and part B is 20% (see Table (6) and Figure (2)) because it includes a long conversation uttered by only one speaker about one particular subject or field. Students sometimes find themselves unfamiliar with the subject and of course here lies the difficulty; they face a difficulty in understanding what the speaker says or means. For those who are not familiar with the skills followed in answering the TOEFL test questions, it is very difficult for them to understand and answer such a type of conversation questions. Those who have taken a course in TOEFL face less difficulty even if they are not familiar with the topics or subjects.

Understanding conversation of course requires understanding the following main segmental and suprasegmental phonological and prosodic features:

- Pronunciation (with different accents)
- Pauses
- Features of natural speech
- Intonation

The majority of our students are not familiar with such features. That is why they find it very difficult to understand conversation and its implication. In general, understanding culture means understanding implied meaning.

Table (6) The Most Difficult Part in Listening Comprehension with Percentages

Parts	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage
Part A	18	30%	42	70%
Part B	12	20%	48	80%
Part C	35	58%	25	42%

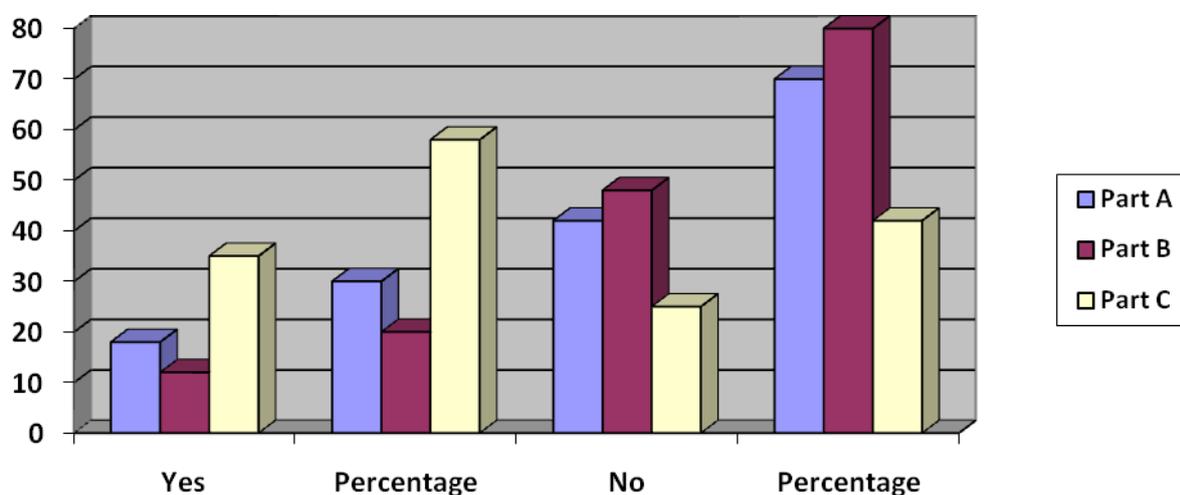


Figure (2) The Most Difficult Part in Listening Comprehension with Percentages

Concerning structure and written expression section, it seems that the Structure (57%), is more difficult than Written Expression (47%) (see Table (7) and Figure (3)). This of course is due to the fact that it is easy to find out a mistake than to complete a missing part of a sentence(especially complex and compound sentences and their types) . Within the Structure , students encounter long sentences (complex and compound) that take time to read and choose the correct choice. This also requires them to consider the time specified for structure and Written Expression (25 minutes only). They have to answer 15 questions of structure and 25 questions of Written Expression within that time limit. Students find written expression much easier than Structure, though the number of questions of this type is more than that of Structure. Therefore, students will also face problem with time. Most of the grammatical rules

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used in structure are used in Written Expression. Similarly, taking a course in TOEFL will save students time by giving them certain skills of how to answer such questions and how to manage time as well.

Table (7)The Difficulty Students Face in Structure and Written Expression with Percentages

Section 2	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage
Structure	34	57%	26	43%
Written Expression	28	47%	32	53%

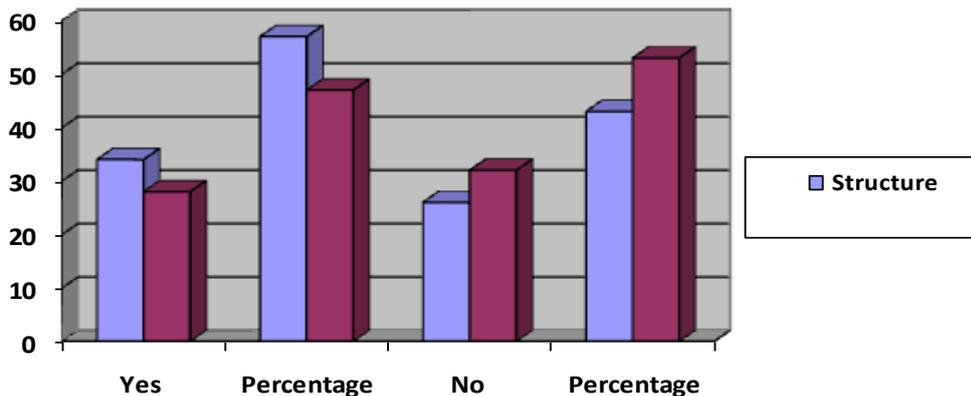


Figure (3)The Difficulty Students Face in Structure and Written Expression with Percentages

Actually, 31 students (52%) agree that reading is difficult in the TOEFL test while 29 students (48%) find it not difficult (see Table (8) and Figure (4)). In reading, students find themselves have time while reading something that is available in front of them; they can read, think, understand, and decide what to choose. They feel that they are not under time pressure. They also understand that they can depend on certain questions they can read attentively more than one time until they reach the answer they believe it represent the correct choice, unlike the listening section where students cannot listen again to the conversation, and it is unlike Structure and Written Expression where they feel that they are under time pressure. In fact, students have to answer 50 questions regarding reading comprehension ,in other words they should read five passages; each passage with 10 questions.

Table (8)The Difficulty Students Face in Reading Comprehension with Percentages

Section 3	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage
Reading Comprehension	31	52%	29	48%

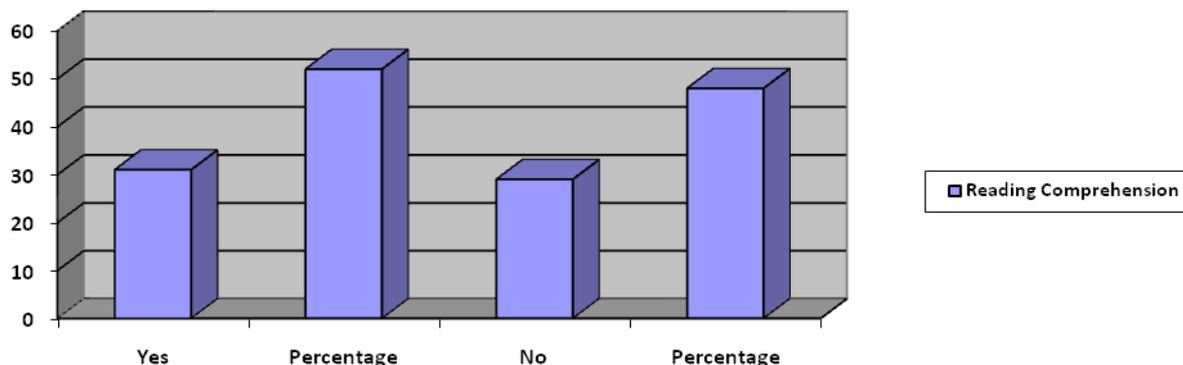


Figure (4)The difficulty students face in Reading Comprehension with percentages

The majority of students agree that the most difficult section of all the TOEFL test sections is the listening section (57%) (see Table (9) and Figure (5)). This is something natural and expected for our students in general since the dominant approach adopted in Iraqi schools is the structural approach rather than the communicative one. This is reflected in their percentage in Reading (22%) and structure and written expression (32%). Moreover, listening to native speakers' conversations or passages is not part of our students' interests. At the university level, very few colleges use English properly in their courses (especially in humanitarian departments except Department of English).

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Table (9) The Most Difficult Section in the TOEFL Test with Percentages

Sections	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage
Listening Comprehension	24	57%	26	43%
Structure and Written Expression	19	32%	41	68%
Reading Comprehension	13	22%	47	88%

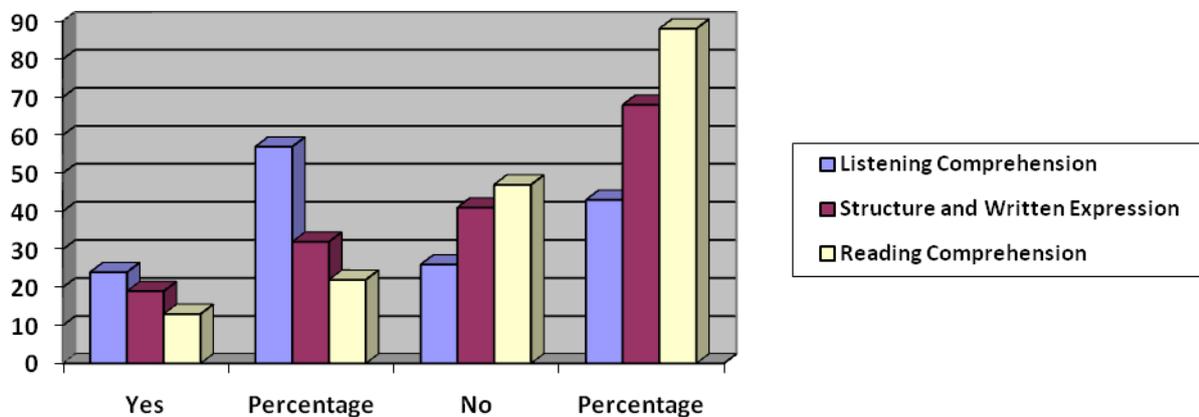


Figure (5) The Most Difficult Section in the TOEFL Test with Percentages

It seems that the decisive factor in the TOEFL test is time. The results reveal that students face difficulty in having enough time for the whole sections. Students have chosen (NO) in answering the question about whether the time allotted is enough or not in the questionnaire given to them: section 1 (70%), section 2 (68%) and section 3 (77%) (see Table (10) and Figure (6)). The time allotted for listening is 35 minutes and students have to answer 50 questions during that specific time. The time allotted for structure and written expressions is 25 minutes only during which students have to answer 40 questions (structure 15 and written expressions 25). On the other hand, the time allotted for reading is 55 minutes and they have to answer 50 questions. This reflects the fact that when students have time they can do better. That is why they find reading more difficult than other sections.

Table (10) The Difficulty in Time Allotted for each Section with Percentages

Sections	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage
Listening Comprehension	18	30%	42	70%
Structure and Written Expression	19	32%	41	68%
Reading Comprehension	20	33%	40	77%

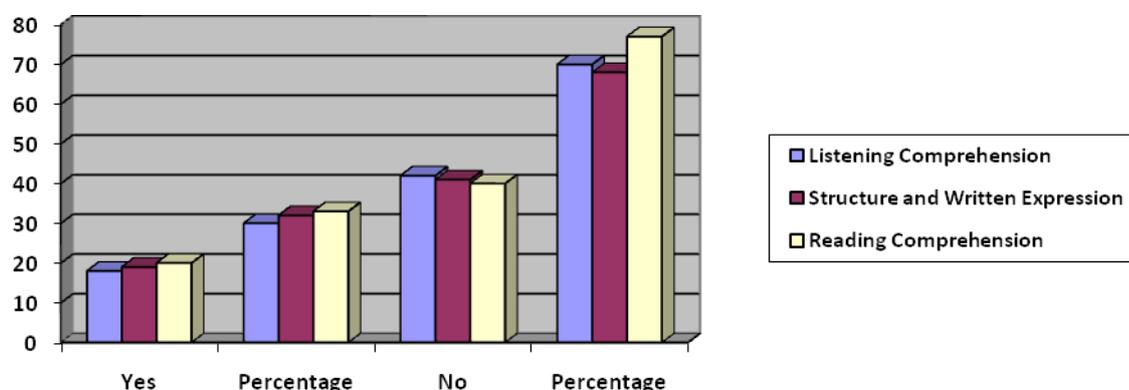


Figure (6) The Difficulty in Time Allotted for each Section with Percentages

Students also face a difficulty in finding the original CDs and books of the TOEFL, i.e. (52%) (see Table (11) and Figure (7)). In addition, it seems that they even lack the experience of how to purchase the suitable materials.

Table (11) The Difficulty Students Face in Finding Suitable TOEFL Materials

Students Face Difficulty	Yes	Percentage
	31	52%
Students Face no Difficulty	No	Percentage
	29	48%

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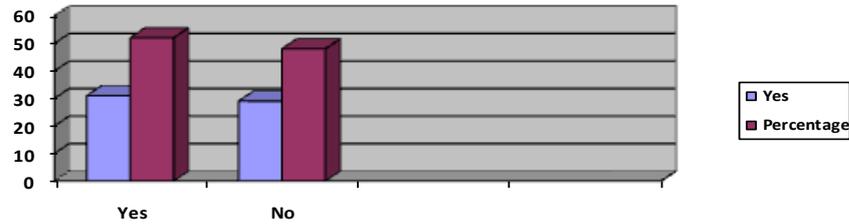


Figure (7) The Difficulty Students Face in Finding Suitable TOEFL Materials

The results also reveal that though the TOEFL is a new programme used in Iraqi universities to apply for higher degrees, most of the students, i.e. (40) students or (77%) (see Table (12) and Figure (8)), have not taken courses in TOEFL before they take the test. Here emerges the necessity of taking a course in TOEFL since such courses provide students with the knowledge of manipulating such a new programme and passing it successfully.

Table (12) Students Who Have Taken Courses in TOEFL Before Taking the TOEFL Test

Yes	20	Percentage	33%
No	40	Percentage	77%

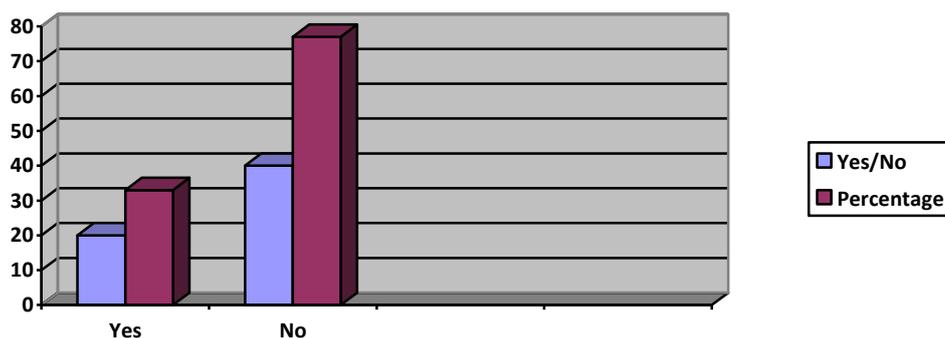


Figure (8) Students Who Have Taken Courses in TOEFL Before Taking the TOEFL Test

Conclusion

The findings of the present research reinforce the belief that the students face certain difficulties during the TOEFL test. Actually, these difficulties are the main reasons behind making certain students fail to pass this test successfully which is one of the requirements for higher studies. These difficulties can be specified as follows:

- 1- As far as the first section is concerned (i.e. Listening Comprehension), it is found that part C (i.e. long conversation) is the most difficult one.
- 2- In dealing with the second section (i.e. Structure and Written Expression), it is clear that the first part (i.e. completing sentences correctly) is more difficult than the second part (i.e. identifying errors within sentences).
- 3- Reading Comprehension, (i.e. the third section), is also considered as a difficult section.
- 4- Taking the three sections into consideration, it is noted that the Listening Comprehension section is the most difficult one, then the second section and finally the third one.
- 5- Actually, there is a real difficulty in having enough time for the whole sections especially for Listening Comprehension and Reading Comprehension.
- 6- Most of the students don't buy or get the appropriate CDs and materials for the TOEFL test.
- 7- Most of the students have not taken courses in TOEFL before they take the TOEFL test.

Recommendations

- 1- To prepare for the Listening Comprehension section, practice to listen to movies, radio programs in English, T.V. newscasts, T.V. documentaries, lectures on educational television channels and to free lectures produced by universities. One can also try to make friendship with English and American speakers and participate in their conversations. All these points are useful for building your listening comprehension skills .

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- 2- To prepare for the Structure and Written Expression section, use advanced grammar review books and practice test items. Try to attend English courses to develop your skills in this section .
- 3- To prepare for the Reading Comprehension section, read a variety of materials in English including newspapers, magazines, excerpts from textbooks and articles from American and English encyclopedias. Moreover, try to read a variety of topics concerning American history, culture, social sciences and natural sciences. What's more, students must collect words and develop their own vocabulary list .
- 4- Practice budgeting your time. TOEFL test sections are taken under time limited pressures. Take into consideration that time management is a key to doing well on the TOEFL test. You need to learn to use your time wisely so that you can complete each section successfully .
- 5- You need to provide yourself with information, CDs, suitable materials concerning the TOEFL test. In addition, you need to know what to expect on the TOEFL test in this case you will not be surprised and confused on the day of the test. Moreover, to succeed on the TOEFL test, begin with a positive attitude, learn what to expect on this test, use your time well to prepare yourself and gain experience by reviewing English and practicing test items.
- 6- Taking courses and Pre-TOEFL tests are important. Practice is also important to passing the TOEFL test successfully. By practicing each section of the TOEFL test, you will gain valuable experience because you will understand the direction for each section and you will know what to do on the official TOEFL test without trying to figure out its items under the stress of an actual test and its time limit. Consequently, you can learn test strategies as well as how to manage your time .

It is also important to mention that using Pre-TOEFL test will make you know which section is the most difficult for you. Then you will know your strong and weak points. Thus, you can concentrate more on the exercises that correspond to the TOEFL sections in which you need to improve your skills. Actually, this will give you certain experience with the types of items or sections that are most challenging for you so that you can develop yourself accordingly .

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Appendix

*You are kindly requested to answer the following questions choosing either **Yes** or **No**.*

Your participation is highly appreciated.

Age: years old

College: Department: Degree applied for: M.A.....

Ph.D

No.	Questions	Yes	No
1	Have you faced any difficulty in finding TOEFL materials?		
2	Have you taken a course in TOEFL before taking the test?		
3	Do you think part A of listening is difficult?		
4	Do you think part B of the listening is difficult?		
5	Do you think part C of the listening is difficult?		
6	Do you think part A of the listening is the most difficult one?		
7	Do you think part B of the listening is the most difficult one?		
8	Do you think part C of the listening is the most difficult one?		
9	Do you think STRUCTURE is difficult?		
10	Do you think WRITTEN EXPRESSION is difficult?		
11	Do you think READING section is difficult?		
12	Do you think SECTION ONE is the most difficult one?		
13	Do you think SECTION TWO is the most difficult one?		
14	Do you think SECTION THREE is the most difficult one?		
15	Do you think time allocated for listening is adequate?		
16	Do you think time allocated for STRUCTURE AND WRITTEN EXPRESSION is adequate?		
17	Do you think time allocated for READING is adequate?		

الخلاصة

يعتبر اختبار التوفل من الاختبارات القياسية المعتمدة عالميا. فهو يستخدم لقياس قدرة متعلم اللغة الانجليزية على فهم اللغة الانجليزية وعلى تمييز بعض النقاط النحوية واللغوية في الكتابة باللغة الانجليزية وقدرته على قراءة النصوص القصيرة المستخدمة في الجامعات والكليات الامريكية الشمالية. يتضمن هذا الاختبار انواع مختلفة مثل (Computer Based) و (Paper Based) و (Internet Based) و (Institutional Testing Program) بشيء من الدقة والتفحص وتحليل الصعوبات التي تواجه المتعلم العراقي للانجليزية في اجتياز هذا الاختبار والذي يعتبر أحد المتطلبات الاجبارية للانخراط في برامج الدراسات العليا.

تتكون الدراسة من جزئين احدهما نظري والاخر عملي. يتضمن الجانب النظري شرحا مفصلا لانواع واقسام اختبارات التوفل المتعددة وبالتحديد TOEFL ITP والذي يعتبر محور هذه الدراسة. يشتمل الجانب العملي على التركيز على الصعوبات التي يواجهها الطالب خلال اختبار TOEFL ITP من خلال الاستبيان المقدم للطلبة الممتحنين. تنتهي هذه الدراسة بالاستنتاجات والتوصيات التي تساعد الطالب على مواجهة هذه الصعوبات واجتياز الاختبار بنجاح وهذا ما تسعى له هذه الدراسة.