

Original Article

Developing Students' Awareness of English Skills through TOEFL Socialization at Sman 4 Pematangsiantar

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ABSTRACT: *English has become a crucial language in various fields such as education, science, technology, and professional development. As a result, English proficiency is becoming increasingly essential for senior high school students who intend to pursue higher education and compete in the global workforce. Nevertheless, several examinees lack knowledge of the Test for English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), which includes objectives, parts and academic importance. This study will describe the implementation of a TOEFL Socialization Program and its contribution to students' awareness of English skills at SMA Negeri 4 Pematangsiantar. The qualitative descriptive method was used with study samples of 29 eleventh-grade students. The data for this study were collected through classroom observation, documentation, and student involvement in the activities implemented. This program was implemented in three phases: preparation, implementation, and evaluation. They also demonstrated that they were engaged, excited and inquisitive with the discussions regarding TOEFL test preparation as well as educational opportunities post-high school. Nonetheless, the evaluation showed that overcoming limitations in vocabulary and diverse levels of English proficiency was still a problem, particularly at some point in this simulated profession. In general, the TOEFL Socialisation Program was effective in promoting students' language awareness and motivating them to be eager about learning English for their academic background towards preparation for professional careers.*

KEYWORDS: *TOEFL Socialization, English Skills, Language Awareness, English Proficiency, Senior High School Students.*

1. INTRODUCTION

English is one of the most-spoken languages across the globe; it has become an important means for global communication in different fields such as education, business and much more. Crystal (2003) defined it as a language that is widely spoken globally among countries, which is intensively used and acts as an intermediary between people with various languages. Within the education sphere, where access to academic journals or study abroad programs can be influenced by language proficiency (often English), the impact of English is becoming more prevalent across the world. Various standardized tests were created to make a good evaluation of how proficient non-native speakers are in English. One such test that is widely accepted and known across universities worldwide is the Test of English as a Foreign Language, or TOEFL. As stated by the Educational Testing Service (ETS), TOEFL is prepared purposely to measure some English skills that are demanded in academic fields such as listening, reading and language structure (Damanik et al., 2025; Marbun et al., 2026). TOEFL score is a general requirement in the world for university acceptance, scholarship applications, study abroad and professional positions with high demand. So, even though students are now more acquainted with TOEFL and its sections for studying abroad or just participation in international academics. With greater importance attached to the knowledge of English and standardized language assessment, still few senior high school students know about TOEFL in relation to their future educational aspirations. Through some preliminary observations and informal interviews, students who have not yet absorbed it before the program is implemented in SMAN 4 Pematangsiantar are said to be never received formal information about TOEFL. Info-together: A TOEFL-multiple-choice-born-test for starters, most participants had little to no knowledge of what the test was for nor understood its format or where their relative skills stood along that spectrum, let alone why they should even bother taking it in order to be seen as meeting institutional markers down the road. Furthermore, these researchers also found that several students did not understand English texts very well; they were unable to master vocabulary, and last but certainly not least, as important was their confidence in using English. If not aware of their English proficiency level, students may break down academically and are unable to prepare for their career path, as low awareness is a high demotivation factor in learners' motivation (Lumban Tungkup et al., 2026). The need for language awareness has been recognised in the literature as a major factor contributing to successful progress and outcome (upon completion) of any learning process. According to Ellis (2008), awareness of language features allows learners to adopt more effective learning strategies. Likewise, Wu (2025) states that language awareness does not only concern linguistic knowledge but also learners' understanding of the importance of these skills and their participation in learning. The more students know about the useful applications of English, the more their motivation to improve competence increases, and the better they are armed to face challenges in academic work.

Thus, raising students' awareness of English skills is a first step to promote positive attitudes and motivation for language learning. Through such programs, they learn about what TOEFL means and its functions, the parts of the test it has, and the English skills tested in this exam. The interactive presentation, more sample questions and discussion of the purpose behind the test help students know about the format of the examination better while also understanding its significance to their academic and career progression in terms of proficiency in English. Earlier community service reports indicated positive effects on students in developing motivation to learn English, skills related to familiarity with TOEFL question types and offering more strategic skills for academic preparation (Napitupulu et al., 2026). Students can use the TOEFL test to discover their current level of English and find out where they need to improve. Those programs are meant to give students more awareness of the importance of being proficient in English and prepare them for facing postsecondary education and a dramatically competitive workforce (Saragih et al., 2025). In order to overcome those problems, the research was conducted by a TOEFL socialization program at SMAN 4 Pematangsiantar. The program consisted of three parts: preparation, implementation and evaluation. It involved presentations, group discussions on TOEFL components, as well as the explanation of some sample prompts aimed at familiarizing students with the test format. The objectives were at least threefold: establish a desire on the part of students to want to study for an English language exam; demonstrate that they understand how TOEFL will help them achieve their future goals (both academic and non-academic); encourage self-confidence in academia and as professionals. Thus, this article attempts to describe how the TOEFL socialization program was conducted and investigate its function in raising students' understanding of English skills. We hope that the results of this study will support advocacy for English learning and demonstrate why there is a need to integrate standardized tests as assessments on EFL proficiency in secondary schools.

2. METHOD OF IMPLEMENTATION

This study used a qualitative descriptive method. Gerring (2017) explains that qualitative research describes phenomena through systematic observations analysed descriptively. The method was used to describe the implementation of a TOEFL socialization program and analyse students' responses and participation (Rumapea et al., 2024). Data were collected through observation, documentation, and a TOEFL Reading test. The focus was on students' reading comprehension skills, including understanding texts, identifying main ideas, and answering questions. The participants were 29 students of Class XI-1 at SMA Negeri 4 Pematangsiantar who joined the program on May 4, 2026. Data were obtained during the offline activity and supported by classroom observation.

The TOEFL socialization program was conducted through three main stages: preparation, implementation, and evaluation.



FIGURE 1 Stages of Method Implementation (Simanjuntak et al., 2025)

2.1. PHASE 1: PREPARATION

The administrative prerequisites that were needed to conduct the activity at the school had been accomplished, and planning for what follows began. Before requesting permission to conduct research at SMA Negeri 4 Pematangsiantar, the writer first had an assignment letter from the course instructor. Once the school administration approved, we then coordinated the program's timing, placement and participants. Based on this coordination, 29 eleventh-grade students were used for the TOEFL socializing exercise. The author also prepared the resources that would be employed during the session. The content was systematically structured and appropriate for the learner level. A station with a laptop, projector and presentation materials was also arranged.

2.2. PHASE 2: IMPLEMENTATION

The socialization programme was carried out at SMA Negeri 4 Pematangsiantar on Monday, May 04th 2026. After a brief introduction of the goals for the activity, the team provided eleventh graders with TOEFL material. In the presentation, I talked briefly about what TOEFL is, its purpose and benefits, test types and skills tested in each test type, and then it finished up with some tips on how to answer TOEFL questions. It was preceded by a PowerPoint presentation to facilitate understanding of the material. The students were enthusiastic and participative throughout the session, i.e., making it a happy learning experience.

2.3. PHASE 3: EVALUATION

Following the presentation, a discussion and question-and-answer session were held to test students' knowledge of TOEFL. The students were engaged; they asked questions and shared their views. Their answers represented improvement in awareness that TOEFL will play an important role for their future studies and careers. The session ended with a summary of the content and thanking students for their participation and support.

3. RESULT

This study aimed to find out the implementation of TOEFL awareness programs for XI-1 students at SMA Negeri 4 Pematangsiantar both in terms of planning, implementing and evaluating the problem. The meeting started off with the facilitators introducing themselves, explaining what was to be expected during the session and what they should take away from it. This activity proceeded in three main phases: preparation, implementation, and evaluation. These phases are described in detail in the table below.

TABLE 1 Timeline of TOEFL Socialization Activities

NO	TIME	MATERIALS
1.	11.00 - 11.05	We introduced ourselves to the students of SMA Negeri 4 Pematangsiantar
2.	11.05 - 11.20	During the TOEFL presentation, Ingrid provided an explanation of the TOEFL test, including its definition, purposes, benefits, different types, and the language skills assessed in the examination.
3.	11.20 - 11.30	Ingrid shared TOEFL test-taking strategies and discussed one sample question.
4.	11.30 - 12.00	TOEFL Reading Test
5.	12.00 - 12.05	The answer sheets were collected by the socialization team.
6.	12.05 - 12.10	A question-and-answer session was conducted, allowing students to ask questions related to TOEFL and the material presented.
7.	12.10 - 12.15	The socialization activity concluded with a thank-you speech to the students for their participation, followed by a farewell from the socialization team.

3.1. PHASE 1: PREPARATION

In the preparation stage, we had to refer back to the school administration along with XII-1's English teacher in order for us to get permission and also set about how are we going to technically arrange this activity. The TOEFL socialization program was not planned for 75 minutes after the schedule had been finalized. Next, they gathered the supplies and equipment required for that session PowerPoint presentation, laptop and speakers. It is an effort to make sure the activity can be carried out in a smooth, effective manner and according to its objectives.



FIGURE 2 Documentation with English Teacher in SMA N 4 Pematangsiantar

3.2. PHASE 2: IMPLEMENTATION

As scheduled, the final stage of the TOEFL Socialization Program was held on Monday, May 4, 2026 in SMA Negeri 4 Pematangsiantar. The activity was focused on the eleventh-grade students and divided into two primary activities, that is, a presentation session followed by a discussion and question-and-answer. Before delivering the materials, the socialization team introduced themselves and their activity aims by highlighting how important a level of English proficiency is among students later on in regard to supporting their academic-pursuance activities throughout, as well as determining whether they will have a successful future job based on TOEFL score.

3.2.1. PRESENTATION SESSION

The first session was dedicated to the presentation of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Juliantina and Yuni Permatasari (2024) stated that TOEFL is an internationally recognized English proficiency test intended to measure the language ability of non-native speakers. In the presentation, students examined the kinds and functions of TOEFL (PBT, CBT, ITP with the latest version: iBT) but focused more on the types of TOEFL that are commonly used in Indonesia (TOEFL-ITP). Presenters then expanded on the three sections measured by TOEFL: Listening Comprehension, Structure and Written Expression, and Reading Comprehension, and how scoring is determined. Following this discussion, students were made aware that TOEFL scores are significant to university admission as well as financial aid and employment. The session focused on the importance of English proficiency, as well as a TOEFL certification for academic and career advancement, prompting students to start working towards enhancing their skills from an early stage.



FIGURE 3 Introducing TOEFL and Benefits of TOEFL

In keeping with the examples of question types on a typical TOEFL examination, resources were presented through PowerPoint slides. They practiced how to answer questions in the Listening, Structure and Written Expression, and Reading Comprehension sections: identifying key information, grammatical structures, building vocabulary, and time management. The use of visuals and hands-on examples led to an engaging learning environment that enhanced student understanding. A previous study showed that students' understanding of the test format and their performance can be improved through TOEFL training and simulations (Susilawaty et al., 2023). Similarly, Putri et al. Based on (2023), the performance of students was improved by 26.6%, and it stressed the importance of early exposure to different TOEFL formats, compared with Utomo & Damayanti (2019). These results demonstrate the need for senior high school students to implement TOEFL in preparation for upcoming academic challenges.



FIGURE 4 Explain about Tips and Tricks in Reading Skill

3.2.2. TOEFL SIMULATION SESSION

After the presentation, students participated in a TOEFL simulation to familiarize themselves with the TOEFL ITP format covering Listening Comprehension, Structure and Written Expression, and Reading Comprehension. Before the simulation, the team summarized instructions and test-taking strategies. The students then had to solve one at a time sample questions, while the presenters were available for help whenever required. This allowed students to practice using the content taught and also helped them understand how the TOEFL works better.

Example of Reading Comprehension Test TOEFL

Read the following passage:

John Quincy Adams, who served as the sixth president of the United States from 1825 to 1829, is today recognized for his masterful statesmanship and diplomacy. He dedicated his life to public service, both in the presidency and in the various other political offices that he held. Throughout his political career, he demonstrated his unswerving belief in freedom of speech, the antislavery cause, and the right of Americans to be free from European and Asian domination.

1. To what did John Quincy Adams devote his life?

- (A) Improving his personal life
- (B) Serving the public
- (C) Increasing his fortune
- (D) Working on his private business

2. In line 4, the word "unswerving" is closest in meaning to

- (A) moveable
- (B) insignificant
- (C) unchanging
- (D) diplomatic



FIGURE 5 Simulation Reading Skill

3.2.3. DISCUSSION AND QUESTION-AND-ANSWER SESSION

After the presentation, there was an active discussion question-and-answer session. Students inquired about the different formats of TOEFL, score thresholds for admission, and certain students wanted to learn how they can enhance their English and answer questions on question-and-answer sessions from a community speaking. They showed their interest in learning English and their enthusiasm. Above all, the session provided a safe place for students to learn and also solidified their comprehension of how relevant TOEFL and English Language proficiency are in working on achieving their career/academic goals.



FIGURE 6 Interactive Question-and-Answer Session Following the TOEFL Presentation

3.3. PHASE 3: EVALUATION

After a presentation, a TOEFL simulation and discussions of what was covered in class were conducted to assess the students' understanding. Results indicated that the students were familiar with TOEFL and its importance for their academic or business purposes. On the other hand, vocabulary remained an albatross around many students' necks as they failed to recall or remember what words actually meant, and hence we can infer that it remains a major obstacle in learning English. The evaluation confirmed that the curriculum was successful in stimulating student awareness and motivation to improve their English language skills.

4. DISCUSSION

The aim of this research is also to introduce the eleventh-grade students at SMA Negeri 4 Pematangsiantar to the concept, format, and importance of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) through the TOEFL Socialization Program. Through preparation, implementation, and evaluation stages, the program familiarized students with question formats and methods of TOEFL as well as further increasing their awareness regarding the significance of English proficiency for postsecondary education and later occupations. Overall, presentations paired with TOEFL simulations came together to create a hybrid classical and hands-on learning environment of theoretical knowledge coupled with real-life experience through discussions around both conversations in addition to assessments.

4.1. EFFECTS ON STUDENTS IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

The TOEFL socializing program had a positive impact on students' perceptions regarding their competence in English and the importance of the test. It also acquainted students with the description, types, and benefits of the test, as well as postsecondary education opportunities, scholarships, or future job prospects. It also provided participants with an opportunity to practice answering TOEFL-style questions, in which new strategies such as skimming and scanning may have been introduced that could aid reading comprehension and testing performance (Pratiwi et al., 2025). In general, we hope the practice could raise students' awareness of the TOEFL such that they aspire to enhance their English.

5. CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING TOEFL

A number of challenges were identified during the TOEFL socialization exercise. Most students have limited testing experience with standardized English proficiency exams, and little experience with the TOEFL. In the TOEFL reading exercise, this meant that unfamiliar terminology created substantial changes in how students responded and what they understood. Differences in English proficiency also caused differences in comprehensibility and performance. These findings illustrate the need for more regular practice with frequent exposure to English texts, in order to help boost pupils' vocab and get them better at reading.

6. STEPS TO OVERCOME THE CHALLENGES

After the talk, students participated in a TOEFL simulation to familiarize themselves with each of these sections on an official test: Reading Comprehension, Listening Comprehension, and Structure and Written Expression. Prior to the simulation, the crew reviewed test-taking strategies and instructions. Students then practiced sample questions, with the speaker helping out as needed. This exercise allowed the students to apply what was covered and get additional practice with understanding how TOEFL works.

7. CONCLUSION

Instead, the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the SMA Negeri 4 Pematangsiantar about TOEFL socialization program have been carried out on target. With this, students were taught what the TOEFL is (its purpose and format), as well as skills that are assessed along with tips on how to take these tests. The outcomes showed that the program motivated students to improve their English and increased their awareness of its importance. Still, limitations were found in vocabulary acquisition, and variations in English skill levels were detected by the TOEFL Reading exam. This finding recommended the need for regular programs on TOEFL and frequent exposure of students to English learning activities at their early stages in order to increase ENGLISH level, which is proven important concerning future academic/professional prospects.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to express their deepest gratitude to SMA Negeri 4 Pematangsiantar, especially the Principal, the English teacher, and the eleventh-grade students, for their cooperation, participation, and support throughout the implementation of the TOEFL Socialization Program. The authors also sincerely thank the Department of English Education, Universitas HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar, for its continuous guidance and support in conducting this community service activity. Their valuable contributions played an important role in the successful completion of this program.

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