



Migrating PBT TOEFL to iBT TOEFL: Opportunities and Challenges of Test Taker

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Abstract

In this era of globalization English proficiency test used as an indicator and requirement for student to go study abroad or get scholarship. PBT old service of proficiency test already stop and replaced with iBT test these phenomena to be issues that student faced now. This research aimed to determine the opportunities and challenges that's Test Taker face in Indonesia. In this research, the researcher used qualitative research collects, analyzes, and interprets comprehensive narrative and visual data to gain insights into a particular phenomenon of interest. This Study research literature documents, the literature provides several steps to incorporate environmental variables in the efficiency estimation. Limitations associated with predictive validity studies, the scope of this study on the EFL Student as Test taker point of view. The focus of this study is to identify the opportunity and the obstacle that faced by EFL Student as test taker during the migration of PBT to iBT. The research that discusses about the opportunity and challenges related migration PBT TOEFL to iBT TOEFL still limited. In this case researcher will did this study to fill the gap of previews study.

Keywords: Challenges, English proficiency test, iBT Test, Opportunities,

Introduction

In this world, there are many languages used to communicate. Every country or region has a different language and accent that makes it unique and different from others. In this digitalization era, communication skills –a necessary key to effectively survive in the 21st century and global world (Ahn, 2015) and English is one of the languages that connect people around the world in general. So, this is important for EFL students to learn and master it, it is especially in Indonesia. There are four skills that we have to learn: speaking, reading, listening, and writing. A language test is an essential component of English language learning (Anwar & Mustafa, 2021).

Language testing serves as a critical benchmark for assessing a learner's knowledge, understanding, and skills in a particular language. The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is widely recognized as a high-stakes test for non-native English speakers, often required for admission to educational institutions or professional programs (Lanteigne & Sulieman, 2021). The Educational Testing Service (ETS) offers two main formats of the TOEFL: the internet-based (iBT) test and the paper-delivered version, which is used in areas where internet-based testing is not feasible. Historically, the paper based TOEFL (PBT) was the standard format; however, it began being phased out in 2021 in most parts of the world (EF Education First, 2021a) (Lanteigne & Sulieman, 2021)

In Indonesia, TOEFL remains a vital component of English proficiency evaluation in higher education institutions, often serving as a graduation requirement. Many universities, such as those studied by Kasim, (2016) in Syiah Kuala University, (Simanjuntak, 2018) in University of Lancang Kuning, (Afri & Harahap, 2019) in Ganesha Polytechnic Medan, and (Farkhan et al., 2019) UIN Syarif Hidayatulloh Jakarta, use PBT TOEFL scores for undergraduate students to register for thesis examinations. Institutions like STKIP Setia Budhi (Nurhayati & Nehe, 2016) and STIKES Banisaleh (Abdulloh et al., 2021) also require it as a benchmark for academic progress. Despite the global shift toward the iBT format, the PBT TOEFL continues to be used extensively in Indonesia due to challenges such as limited infrastructure, higher costs associated with iBT, and the accessibility of PBT in regions beyond major cities. These barriers make the PBT a viable and practical alternative for students, particularly those from low-income backgrounds.

The transition from PBT to iBT TOEFL remains an ongoing challenge in Indonesia. While the iBT format offers broader content coverage, including speaking and writing sections, it is predominantly available in urban areas, leaving rural students at a disadvantage. The higher costs of iBT, compounded by travel expenses to reach test centers in big cities, further exacerbate this issue for students from low-income families. In this context, the PBT TOEFL remains a relevant and accessible alternative, continuing to serve as an essential tool for evaluating English proficiency. Moreover, both PBT and iBT tests have demonstrated strong content validity, ensuring they effectively measure the English language skills they aim to assess (Sawaki & Sinharay, 2018).

PBT and iBT have also been developed from several activities, from the formulation of materials and has indicators that aim to test and evaluate. Related to the validity of PBT and iBT, the two-test relative similar and have same correlation and similarity in the skill that will be test. The paper-based version, most known as Institutional TOEFL, consists of three sections, i.e., listening comprehension (50 items), structure & written expression (40 items), and reading comprehension (50 items). Listening comprehension tests understanding of short dialogues, extended-length dialogues, and short talks. The second section

measures knowledge of English grammar through completion and error analysis tests. Finally, reading comprehension measures understanding of stated and implied meaning and vocabulary in five 400-450-word academic texts (Cohen & Upton, 2007). Meanwhile, has five sections that will be tested and time limit that different from PBT. The total test takes about 3 hours to complete, but you should plan for 3.5 hours, allowing 30 minutes for check-in. Test sections overview.

This Article is to fill gap that come up and yet covered from previews research, the previews research was focused on finding content validity, construct validity, and the Test Takers learning strategies. The aims of this research are to find the problem and the Opportunity of Migrating Paper Based Test TOEFL Into iBT test by Test Takers, especially in Indonesia. The next section of is the literature and methodology that explain the theoretical and logical framework. In addition, the results of this article are the problem and the opportunity faced by Test Takers, why PBT as English testing, still used to evaluate student skills.

Literature Review

TOEFL PBT

TOEFL PBT created by ETS (Educational Testing Service), The TOEFL PBT most used in Indonesia to evaluate English skill in general, before the internet-based iBT introduced. This version of the TOEFL was include the original constructs of listening, reading, structure and grammar. In this day, since the internet-based TOEFL, ETS is working to phase out the paper-based version. However, the TOEFL PBT is still administered in 70 or more countries where the Internet is not available and/or unreliable (Vu & Vu, 2013).

The target market of this language testing is English language learners (specifically to intermediate to advanced level) from High school student to higher education institution, or person who wants to get a scholarship, certification or apply for a visa. PBT Test can be divided into three sections: listening comprehension (50 items), structure and writing section (40 items), and reading comprehension (50 items) every section of the test has time limit (EF Education First, 2021b).

TOEFL iBT

TOEFL iBT Published by Educational Testing Service (ETS), the TOEFL iBT is the most current version of the TOEFL. It was developed in 2005 and is an entirely internet-based assessment. Based on research regarding communicative competencies and the academic genre the TOEFL iBT was developed to assess test-takers communicative competencies within the academic genre (W. Yu & Iwashita, 2021a). Its target audience is English language learners with an intermediate to advanced level of English trying to gain admission into a higher education institution, receive a scholarship or certification, or apply for a visa.

TOEFL iBT has four sections in total: the reading, listening, speaking, and writing modalities (Sawaki & Sinharay, 2018), every section of the test has different time to access.

Table 1: Table of test section and time limit

Section	Time Limit	Questions
Reading	54–72 minutes	30–40 questions
Listening	41–57 minutes	28–39 questions
Break	10 minutes	—
Speaking	17 minutes	4 tasks
Writing	50 minutes	2 tasks

Methodology

In this research study, the researcher used descriptive qualitative research collects, analyzes, and interprets comprehensive narrative and visual data to gain insights into a particular phenomenon of interest (Given, 2012) to explore the phenomenon of transitioning from PBT to iBT TOEFL. Unlike quantitative research, which relies on numbers, statistics, and standardized data to test hypotheses and draw conclusions, qualitative research emphasizes understanding complex issues, practices, and social dynamics through non-standardized data such as texts, interviews, and images (Flick, 2018).

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research approach to explore the transition from PBT to iBT TOEFL among Indonesian EFL students. Unlike quantitative research, which uses statistical models to generalize findings, qualitative research is flexible and context-sensitive, aiming to understand the "how" and "why" behind phenomena (Flick, 2018). Instead of quantifying how many students face challenges, we focus on identifying and interpreting the types of challenges and opportunities encountered during the migration process.

Focus to this study is a comprehensive literature review, aligning with Creswell & Creswell, (2017) emphasis on literature reviews in qualitative research for providing context and deepening analysis. We reviewed 20 articles related to PBT and iBT TOEFL, most of which are based in Indonesia. This extensive review allowed us to synthesize existing findings and theories, offering a solid foundation for analyzing the experiences of EFL students as test takers within the Indonesian context.

However, relying on these 20 articles presents limitations and potential biases. Since most studies focus on Indonesia, the findings may not be generalizable to other settings. Additionally, there's a possibility of publication bias, as studies with significant or positive results are more likely to be published. Recognizing these limitations ensures a critical interpretation of the findings and highlights the need for future research to address any gaps identified in the existing literature.

Findings And Discussion

This study provides an in-depth examination of the transition from the Paper-Based Test (PBT) TOEFL to the Internet-Based Test (iBT) TOEFL, with particular emphasis on the challenges and opportunities encountered by Indonesian students. Through a literature analysis, the study investigates how this migration process affects test takers, highlighting the numerous factors—such as technology, infrastructure, and familiarity with the test format—that shape their experience. This review highlights pertinent issues; however, it is crucial to recognize that the analysis relies on existing literature, indicating limitations in the data scope. The findings, though informative, may not comprehensively encompass every aspect of the migration process, especially in areas with limited data or where distinct local variables are influential.

A significant obstacle in this transition is the inequality in access to technology and infrastructure. A multitude of students encounter challenges due to inadequate internet connectivity and restricted access to digital devices, rendering the iBT TOEFL arduous, if not unfeasible. Individuals acclimated to the PBT format may find the unique online configuration of the iBT daunting, perhaps resulting in test anxiety. Furthermore, students from remote regions or those with inadequate technological proficiency may perceive the shift as especially challenging. These obstacles impede numerous students from achieving optimal performance, constraining their prospects for success in the examination.

The Challenges of Test Taker

In this section researcher will reveals the challenges of test taker in process of migrating the PBT TOEFL to the iBT TOEFL test. The research focuses on the difficulties of the migrating of the test. The researcher gathers the challenges based on previews study.

1. Public Facilities and Accessibility

Public Facilities and Accessibility, to be one of big problem in migrating PBT test to iBT test Indonesia not all area has covered with good internet connection, and there is a lot of rural area that didn't have good public facilities such as electricity, public transportation etc. it is actually not only in Indonesia, there are a lot of country that has similar problem with that Asia, same area of United stated, Africa, and Middle East Countries didn't has good public facilities (Vu & Vu, 2013).

In this case make iBT cannot optimally develop and spread in some areas, and PBT to be alternative that they have it is reveals on Vu & Vu,(2013) research. Test takers have to come far away to areas that has good facilities and spent more money to that. It is not critical issue if test takers have good economic background. But in other hand if test taker came from low economic background, it will be serious problem.

2. Internet connection and supporting system

Internet Connection to be the basic needs for test takers to registered and

attended to iBT test. It will be critical issues for test takers from rural area that didn't has good facilities of internet connection. Norris, 2001) in his research show some error probably occur during online test that might affect on the buffering, time to load, frozen the web page, over load the server/traffic, and others problem related on the test-takers internet connection and the condition of test takers computer. the test takers of iBT or a web test, required a good internet access to reduce the risk and check the device in good conditions it will make them more money for some test takers it will cost a lot (Isbell & Kremmel, 2020).

3. Test takers technology literacy and anxiety

TOEFL iBT require test taker to participate the test using computer it is similar with CBT test. In this case, test taker test takers are required mastered/ know how to operate computer with mouse and keyboard (W. Yu & Iwashita, 2021b), test-takers which has low computer familiarity shown anxiety, it will affect to their performance.(G. Yu, 2010). Participant which familiar to operate computer have bigger change to improve to have better result, it is similar with research that Mangesa (2021) reveal. Jeong (2014) in his research also say computer familiarity also to be variable that influence test takers score.

4. Test Model and Familiarity

There are some differences related PBT and iBT scope of skill in test. there are two skills that PBT not test: Speaking and writing test. Test takers that's usually take PBT will have problem when taking iBT. Test takers with has experience in iBT will be easier and get better score. The other hands in iBT there are writing test, rest takers that not familiar with this test will struggle more, especially they have to write using keyboard. In study that Barkaoui (2015) did there are data report about typographical error during writing section on iBT. Wolfe and Manalo (2004) also agree that more concern and familiar with and writings essays rather than using computer, there easier to them and less error during writing. Speaking section also new skill that exist on iBT test, there are issue that test takers must know about it, especially related to internet access. Test takers must make sure they have good internet connection; it will be worse if they have error with connection.

The Opportunities of Test Taker in Migrating PBT to iBT

iBT test is version of PBT, that is still growing time by the time in Indonesia. The need of English proficiency that accepted internationally is very crucial, since PBT test stop, iBT test is one of proficiency that accept now. As English proficiency iBT has a lot of opportunities and changes to grow more instead of all of the challenges. The researcher gathers the findings of based on previews study that has correlation.

1. Validity of iBT Test

PBT test score is only accept and recognized internally by the test administering institution and used to pre-qualify students for graduation. But another side PBT already stop and replaced by iBT. Since iBT came and begin to introduce it is a

chance to take the test. TOEFL iBT scores as a language requirement for immigration and visa application purposes in the America, UK and Australia, for Languages (Council, 2009). Another benefit to test takers iBT test also has functions to applied study abroad or scholarship. In this case iBT can more develop.

2. Time and Place Flexibility

In the middle of covid-19 pandemic the needs of proficiency are high. The PBT test required test takers to come to the test center. iBT test make test takers easier and save from virus. It is possible to test takers complete the test without attending the test center (Ockey, 2009). Hosseini report in his research say that test takers prefer using computer while test because it is more efficient in the aspect of time (Hosseini et al., 2014). Weigle on his research stated that iBT test takers come from regions and communities that are exposed to the digital-centered (Cushing Weigle, 2010). TOEFL iBT placements are delivered worldwide test takers from around the world has easy access to it. Cost that test taker pay to iBT test cheaper than IELTS.

3. The Increasing of Number TOEFL Institution Services

The movement and development of English testing in Indonesia is growing fast especially for iBT test services. The condition of Covid19 also to be catalyst and the condition of online learning make them growing fast too. Test takers that now has more insight and information related iBT test. TOEFL preparation course as a product of English Test Service will help test takers more familiar with test model and type of skills. Maharani in his research stated that TOEFL preparation course will help Test takers to get more information and learning. TOEFL preparation course as a product from TOEFL test service will gather material and learning method that suitable to participant (Maharani & Putro, 2021).

Conclusion

The process of transitioning from the PBT TOEFL to the more modern iBT (Internet-based Test) TOEFL has been a significant trend in recent years, as it reflects the growing use of technology in educational assessments. This shift to an internet-based test is considered to be a step forward in improving the standard of English proficiency testing. However, the transition from PBT to iBT remains challenging and opportunities for test takers, especially in Indonesia. Issues such as inadequate public facilities, poor internet connectivity, and limited accessibility in some areas have made the migration process more difficult for some test takers.

While PBT TOEFL is still widely used, especially in countries with less technological infrastructure, the rapid development of technology and the internet has accelerated the need for a transition to the iBT TOEFL. Governments and educational institutions must prioritize improving public facilities, internet access, and transportation to ensure the successful and equitable implementation of this

transition. The PBT TOEFL (Paper-based Test of English as a Foreign Language) test score remains a significant requirement for undergraduate students in Indonesia, including those from both English and non-English departments, to complete their bachelor's degree.

It is also commonly required for students who wish to register for examinations, as indicated in previous studies by Kasim, (2016) Additionally, various universities across Indonesia, such as the University of Lancang **Kuning** (Simanjuntak, 2018), Ganesha Polytechnic Medan (Afri & Harahap, 2019), UIN Syarif Hidayatulloh Jakarta (Farkhan et al., 2019), and STKIP Setia Budhi (Nurhayati & Nehe, 2016), emphasize the importance of the TOEFL score as a graduation requirement. Similarly, STIKES Banisaleh, as mentioned by Abdulloh et al., (2021), also administers the PBT TOEFL test for its students.

These institutions' reliance on the PBT TOEFL highlights its enduring relevance in the educational system, particularly for students pursuing higher education and academic requirements like thesis writing. Test takers, particularly those from rural areas, face unique challenges when migrating from PBT to iBT TOEFL. The lack of familiarity with online testing formats, inadequate internet connections, and limited access to the necessary technology can all hinder a test taker's ability to perform well on the iBT.

Additionally, test takers may experience increased anxiety due to unfamiliarity with the digital test format and its requirements. While the iBT TOEFL offers flexibility in test-taking, such as the ability to register and complete the test online, the digital divide remains a significant barrier for some students, particularly those in less developed regions. This gap in technology access presents both a challenge and an opportunity for further research and development in the field of educational technology.

The shift to iBT TOEFL has accelerated, particularly during the pandemic era, as online learning and digital media have become more prevalent. The necessity for teachers and students to adapt to online learning platforms has made students more accustomed to using computers and other digital media for studying. This shift in learning habits aligns with the transition to iBT TOEFL, where test takers are required to complete the test on a computer. The growth of the iBT test can be attributed to several factors: its validity as an internationally accepted English proficiency test, its flexibility in terms of registration and online test-taking, and the increasing number of TOEFL service institutions.

For test takers unfamiliar with the iBT format or with limited knowledge of English proficiency tests, TOEFL preparation courses offer valuable support, helping students to better understand the test format and improve their scores. This growing availability of preparation courses ensures that test takers are better prepared for the challenges posed by the iBT test, facilitating a smoother transition from the traditional PBT format. Finally in the end of this article, researcher hopes the study can help the readers or other researcher to understand deeply related

the challenges and opportunity of migration PBT to iBT test, it is crucial things. Researcher hope this article can used as references to others researchers who want to conduct study in in the same areas.

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