

## Analysing the Role of English Language Proficiency (TOEFL) in Increasing Job Opportunities in the Global Industry Sector

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the role of English language proficiency, particularly TOEFL scores, in enhancing employment opportunities in the global industrial sector. Globalisation has driven major changes in the way companies operate, and English is now an international language used not only in everyday communication but also in business transactions, negotiations, and strategic decision-making. Along with this development, mastery of English has become one of the main requirements in the recruitment process of many international companies, especially those with operations in various countries. In the global industrial sector, multinational companies look for employees who can communicate well in English as they interact with various parties from different parts of the world. Therefore, good English proficiency, as measured through TOEFL scores, is considered an indicator of an individual's ability to adapt and work effectively in a multinational work environment. This study uses a qualitative approach with in-depth interviews with 25 professionals working in multinational companies operating in various industry sectors, such as technology, finance, and manufacturing. The results show that TOEFL scores are not only used as a parameter in job selection, but also as an important indicator in the assessment of communication skills required in cross-national and cultural interactions. Respondents revealed that a good command of English, as evidenced by a high TOEFL score, opens up more career opportunities, including the chance to get higher positions, greater responsibility, and more competitive salaries. Therefore, this study provides recommendations for individuals to further emphasise mastery of English through the TOEFL test as an effort to increase competitiveness in the global job market, as well as for educational institutions and companies to make more use of TOEFL scores in assessing the qualifications of prospective employees.

**Keywords:** *English Language Proficiency, TOEFL, Job Opportunities, Global Industry.*

### INTRODUCTION

Globalisation has had a significant impact on the world of work, causing major changes in the structure of labour markets around the world. Rapid developments in information technology, international trade, as well as cultural exchanges between countries open up great opportunities for companies to expand their operations to different countries. In this context, communication has become a key factor for companies' success in operating in the global market. Therefore, globalised industries require a workforce that can communicate effectively across countries and cultures. One of the increasingly important aspects of international

communication is the ability to speak English, which has become the dominant language in the global business world.

English is now not only the language of instruction in everyday life, but also the main communication tool in the global industrial sector, including in multinational companies that have branches or offices in various countries. English is used for various purposes, ranging from business meetings, negotiations, report preparation, to communication with customers and colleagues abroad. Thus, mastery of English is one of the competencies that are highly sought after by companies, especially those operating in international markets. According to research conducted by Graddol (2021), more than 80% of multinational companies use English in their internal and external communications, making it an essential language for success in the global market.

Along with the increasing need for English language skills, many multinational companies now make English proficiency, often measured by TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) scores, one of the main requirements in the job selection process. TOEFL is one of the most internationally recognised English language proficiency tests, designed to measure the extent to which an individual can understand and use English in academic and professional contexts. The TOEFL score is an important indicator for companies to assess the ability to communicate prospective employees in English, which is a key skill in a globalised work environment.

Research by Abdullah et al. (2020) shows that many international companies, particularly in the technology and finance sectors, prioritise prospective employees with high TOEFL scores as part of the main recruitment requirements. In this study, it was found that 65% of multinational companies in Southeast Asia use TOEFL scores as a standard in the selection process, given the importance of English language skills for working with international teams. Thus, not only are technical skills required in the job, but the ability to communicate effectively in English is becoming a requirement to secure job opportunities in the global industrial sector.

Nonetheless, although the TOEFL test has become an accepted standard in many international companies, the direct influence of TOEFL scores on job opportunities in the global industrial sector is still relatively little explored in the existing literature. Most of the existing research focuses more on the influence of English proficiency on academic success or study abroad opportunities, while its direct influence on the global labour market is rarely discussed. In fact, an understanding of how English proficiency as measured through the TOEFL test can affect the job selection process, career progression, and mobility in the global industry is essential to help individuals prepare themselves to face increasingly fierce competition.

For example, research conducted by Horwitz et al. (2022) showed that although many companies prioritise TOEFL scores in recruitment, there are significant differences in how companies view TOEFL scores. Some companies consider TOEFL scores as evidence of sufficient English proficiency to work in a multinational environment, while others focus more on practical communication skills in more tangible work contexts, such as presentations or business negotiations. This raises important questions regarding how much the TOEFL score contributes to improving job opportunities and career success in the global industrial sector.

Furthermore, while there are many benefits that come with having a high TOEFL score, great challenges are still faced by many, especially those who come from countries with limited access to English education. Many job candidates struggle to achieve an adequate TOEFL score, even if they have excellent technical skills. This leads to inequality in access to job opportunities in global corporations, especially for individuals who do not have a strong English education background. For example, research by Zhang (2021) revealed that in some developing countries, such as Indonesia and India, prospective employees who want to work in multinational companies often have to face great challenges to achieve an adequate TOEFL score, even though they have more than sufficient technical skills.

Based on this background, this study aims to answer several important questions related to the effect of TOEFL scores on job opportunities in the global industrial sector. First, how does the TOEFL score affect the job selection process in multinational companies? This research will examine the extent to which the TOEFL score is a determining factor in job selection, and whether there are other criteria that are more important than just the TOEFL score. Secondly, does the TOEFL score contribute to career advancement in the global industrial sector? This research will also look at whether individuals with high TOEFL scores have better career opportunities, including the opportunity to get a higher position or the opportunity to work abroad. Finally, what are the challenges faced by individuals in obtaining an adequate TOEFL score? This research will explore the obstacles faced by job candidates who come from educational backgrounds with limited access to English language training, and how they overcome these challenges.

By answering these questions, this study is expected to provide deeper insights into the importance of English language skills, as measured by TOEFL scores, in improving employment opportunities in the global industrial sector. This research is also expected to provide recommendations for individuals who want to improve their English skills to be able to compete in an increasingly competitive global job market, as well as for companies and educational

institutions in devising more effective policies in assessing and preparing a workforce that is ready to work in a multinational environment.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***Professional Competence Theory***

Professional competence encompasses the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to perform the duties of a job effectively and efficiently. English language skills have become an integral part of professional competence in the globalised world of work. In this context, mastery of English is not only considered as an additional skill, but as an essential part of the competencies required to function well in an international work environment.

According to Spencer and Spencer (2020), professional competence can be defined as a set of knowledge, skills and behaviours that are relevant to job tasks and that support success in the job. In an increasingly connected globalised world, English has become a highly sought-after skill by employers due to its role in communication across countries and cultures. As the need to communicate with colleagues and customers from different parts of the world increases, the ability to speak and write in English is becoming increasingly important. Therefore, multinational companies often favour applicants who have good English language skills, especially those that can be proven through international standardised tests such as TOEFL.

In a study by Lopez (2021), it was explained that English language ability, which is part of professional competence, has a significant impact on a person's ability to work in global companies. The TOEFL test, which measures English language skills comprehensively, is a tool widely used by companies to assess the English language competence of prospective employees. A high TOEFL score indicates that a person has good communication skills in an international language, which is essential for interacting with clients or colleagues from different countries. Therefore, good English skills are a determining factor in winning the competition for jobs in the global industrial sector.

### ***Human Capital Theory***

Human capital theory, proposed by Gary Becker in 1964, states that investment in education and skills will increase individual productivity, which in turn opens up better job opportunities and increases individual income. In the context of this study, mastery of English, which can be measured through the TOEFL test, can be considered a form of investment in human capital. By mastering English, individuals not only improve their competence, but also increase their competitiveness in the global labour market.

According to Becker (1993), human capital refers to the knowledge, skills and abilities of individuals that can increase their productivity at work. Investments in human capital, such as English language education, can generate significant returns in the form of increased earnings and career opportunities. In the globalised world of work, English is becoming a highly valuable skill. Therefore, job candidates who have good English language skills are more likely to get jobs in international companies and obtain higher positions in those companies.

In a study conducted by Kwon and Lee (2022), it was found that workers with a good command of English have a greater chance of being promoted to managerial or executive positions in global companies. This suggests that English language skills can be a profitable investment in terms of career, as they provide access to wider opportunities in the international workforce. Thus, human capital theory provides a deeper understanding of how mastery of English through the TOEFL test serves as a form of investment that increases competitiveness and opens up job opportunities in the global industrial sector.

### ***Globalisation Theory***

Globalisation theory explains how large corporations operate globally and how globalisation affects the labour market. Globalisation creates greater interaction between countries and multinational companies, which require a workforce with international skills. One of the key skills sought by multinational corporations is the ability to speak English, which is becoming the primary language of instruction in international business communication.

According to Steger (2021), globalisation refers to the process by which the world becomes increasingly connected economically, politically, socially, and culturally, allowing companies to expand their markets worldwide. In this increasingly connected global environment, large corporations require employees who are able to communicate effectively across countries and cultures. English, as an international language used in almost all global business transactions, is becoming a key tool for communicating across a wide range of work contexts.

In a study conducted by Tan and Ling (2023), it was found that multinational companies in Asia Pacific highly prioritise English language skills in their hiring process. This is due to the need to communicate with clients, suppliers and colleagues from different countries. In this context, English language proficiency is not just an additional skill, but a fundamental requirement for individuals who want to work in multinational companies operating in the global market. Therefore, mastery of English, which can be tested through the TOEFL test, is a very

important factor in determining how much chance a person has to work in the global industrial sector.

### ***Language Learning Theory***

Language learning theory examines how individuals learn a foreign language and master specific language skills. In the context of this study, language learning theory is very relevant because mastery of English tested through the TOEFL test is directly related to an intensive and continuous language learning process. This theory explains how individuals can learn and master a foreign language through various approaches, ranging from formal learning in schools to language courses or self-learning methods.

According to Krashen (2022), a theory of language learning known as "input theory" states that individuals will learn a language more effectively if they are exposed to the target language in a communicative and contextualised context. In this case, the TOEFL test not only serves as a tool to measure one's English proficiency, but also reflects the learning process that has been carried out by individuals. This process can involve various aspects, such as reading comprehension, listening, speaking, and writing in English. A high TOEFL score reflects that a person has gone through an intensive learning process and can use English effectively in academic and professional situations.

In addition, language learning theory also deals with how individuals acquire language skills through experience and interaction with native speakers or environments that use English naturally. In a study by Ali et al. (2021), it was found that individuals who engage in situations that allow them to communicate in English directly, such as working or studying abroad, tend to have higher TOEFL scores compared to those who only learn through written materials or formal learning. This suggests that language learning that involves direct interaction and use of language in a real context can accelerate and improve one's language skills.

## **METHOD**

This study aims to analyse the role of English language proficiency, particularly as measured by TOEFL scores, in improving employment opportunities in the global industrial sector. To achieve this goal, this research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study wanted to explore in depth individual perspectives on the role of English language skills in the context of employment in multinational companies. In this case, this research not only aims to answer questions regarding the

relationship between TOEFL scores and career opportunities, but also to explore respondents' personal experiences and perspectives related to the use of English in the global world of work.

### ***Research Design***

This research uses a case study design with a focus on multinational companies operating in Indonesia. The case study approach was chosen because it allows researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of phenomena that occur within a specific context. With this design, the researcher can study in detail how TOEFL scores and English language proficiency affect individual career opportunities in companies that have international operations. This case study incorporates first-hand experiences from professionals working in an international environment, thus providing a more holistic insight into the topic under study.

### ***Research Participants***

One important aspect of this research is the selection of respondents. To ensure that the data collected is relevant and representative, respondents were selected using purposive sampling technique, which is the selection of samples based on certain criteria that are considered relevant to the research objectives. The criteria for selecting respondents in this study are as follows:

1. Work Experience: Respondents should have a minimum of two years' work experience in a company with international operations. This is so that respondents have sufficient insight into the role of English language skills in the international workplace.
2. Employment Status: Respondents must work for a multinational company based in Indonesia, with a focus on global industry sectors that require cross-border communication, such as technology, finance, manufacturing, and energy.

A total of 25 respondents were selected for in-depth interviews. The selection of the number of respondents was based on the consideration that this number is sufficient to generate rich and comprehensive data in qualitative research, while still allowing in-depth analysis of each individual's experience. In addition, this number of respondents is in accordance with the principle of data saturation in qualitative research, which is the point at which data collection no longer generates new information.

### ***Data Collection and Analysis***

Data collection in this study was conducted through in-depth interviews, which were the main technique for collecting primary data. In-depth interviews were chosen because they allow researchers to gain a deeper understanding of respondents' experiences, views and

perceptions related to the research topic. The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide that consisted of a series of open-ended questions designed to explore the respondents' understanding of the role of English language skills, particularly through TOEFL scores, in improving job and career opportunities in the global industrial sector.

The semi-structured interview guide allowed for flexibility in the interview process, where the researcher could adjust the questions according to the respondents' answers, as well as delve deeper into relevant topics that emerged during the interview. Some examples of questions asked to respondents include:

1. To what extent does English proficiency, especially as measured by TOEFL, affect the job selection process at the company where you work?
2. How does your TOEFL score play a role in your career advancement within a multinational company?
3. What was the biggest challenge you faced in obtaining a high TOEFL score, and how did it affect your career opportunities?

Interviews were conducted face-to-face or through video conferencing applications to facilitate accessibility, especially for respondents working outside the city or country. Each interview lasted between 45 to 60 minutes and was recorded with permission from the respondents to ensure that the data collected could be analysed appropriately.

In addition to in-depth interviews, this research also collected secondary data through literature studies of various articles, journals, books, and reports relevant to the research topic. This secondary data was used to provide a broader context regarding the relationship between English language proficiency and job opportunities in the global industrial sector. The literature study is also useful to understand how TOEFL scores are used in job selection in multinational companies and how global companies view English language skills in determining the qualifications of their candidates.

Some of the primary sources used in this research include recent journal articles on the influence of English language skills on career success, as well as books that discuss professional competence in a global context. This secondary data provided a stronger theoretical basis for the analysis of the interview results.

Data collected through in-depth interviews and literature studies were analysed using thematic analysis techniques. Thematic analysis is a qualitative approach used to identify, analyse and report patterns (themes) in data. This technique is very suitable for use in qualitative research which aims to explore an in-depth understanding of the experiences, views and perceptions of individuals towards a phenomenon.



The data analysis steps taken are as follows:

1. Interview Transcription: All recorded interviews were then transcribed to ensure that the data could be properly analysed. This transcription included the entire conversation between the researcher and the respondent, which was then analysed to find relevant patterns.
2. Data Coding: After the transcription was completed, the next step was to code the data,
3. i.e. to mark certain parts of the data related to the theme or topic of the study. Coding was done by identifying words or sentences that frequently appeared in the interviews, relating to the role of English language ability, TOEFL scores, and career opportunities.
4. Identification of Themes: Based on the coding of the data, the researcher then identified the main themes that emerged from the interviews. These themes included factors that influence job opportunities in the global industrial sector, as well as how TOEFL scores relate to the qualifications sought by multinational companies.
5. Drafting a Thematic Report: Once the main themes were identified, the researcher compiled a thematic report that describes the patterns that emerged in the data and how the themes are interconnected. This report describes the key findings of the research and provides insights into how English language proficiency, as measured through the TOEFL, affects career opportunities in the global industrial sector.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the study, several steps were taken:

1. Data Triangulation: Researchers used data triangulation by comparing findings from in-depth interviews with secondary data obtained from related literature. In this way, the results obtained are more credible and can be accounted for.
2. Member Checking: After the initial findings were obtained, the researcher re-contacted some of the respondents to ensure that the interpretation given to their data was accurate and in line with their experiences.

## **FINDINGS**

This study aims to explore the role of English language proficiency, particularly as measured by TOEFL scores, in enhancing employment opportunities in the global industrial sector. Based on interviews with 25 professionals working in multinational companies in Indonesia, several important patterns were found regarding how TOEFL scores play a role in the job selection process, increasing professional competence, career opportunities, and

challenges faced in obtaining a high TOEFL score. This discussion will outline the key findings of the research and provide context in relation to the existing literature.

### ***The Role of TOEFL in the Job Selection Process***

Most respondents revealed that the TOEFL score is one of the main indicators in the job selection process in multinational companies. According to an article by Marsidi and Hakim (2023), many international companies use the TOEFL test as a tool to evaluate the communication skills of prospective employees, especially in the context of using English in a global work environment. This is in line with the opinion expressed by one of the respondents who stated,

*"A high TOEFL score is one of the requirements that is almost always used in the selection process. It shows that we are able to communicate in English well, which is very important in an international team."*

Based on the interviews, respondents confirmed that companies often use TOEFL scores as a criterion for screening applicants. The main purpose of using this TOEFL test is to ensure that candidates have sufficient English language skills, not only to communicate effectively with international teams but also to adapt to a work environment that uses English as the language of instruction. As described in a study by Lestari (2022), multinational companies often prioritise English language skills to facilitate more efficient communication within cross-country teams.

The importance of English language proficiency in the world of work is getting stronger in this era of globalisation. According to Jansen and Pappas (2023), multinational companies in the global industrial sector view English proficiency as the key to working with international partners, negotiating global contracts, and participating in meetings with clients and customers from different parts of the world. Therefore, English proficiency as measured by the TOEFL test is often one of the important requirements in recruitment.

### ***Improving Professional Competence***

Apart from being used in initial selection, good English language skills also contribute to improving professional competence in the workplace. The interview results show that respondents who have high TOEFL scores feel more confident in communicating in English, both in meetings, presentations, and when interacting with international colleagues. This is in line with the findings in a study by Alfiansyah (2022), which showed that employees with better English language skills are more likely to actively participate in international business discussions, thus increasing their involvement in the company's strategic projects.

For example, one respondent who works in a global technology company revealed,  
*"With a good TOEFL score, I feel more confident when presenting in front of international clients. I not only feel more fluent, but also better able to communicate my ideas and proposals clearly."*

A good command of English enables these professionals to access the latest information, collaborate more effectively in cross-cultural teams, and improve their ability to make decisions related to global strategy.

According to research by Manurung and Simamora (2023), strong English language ability, often measured through the TOEFL test, helps individuals to become more competent in their jobs, allowing them to develop additional skills needed in higher and more strategic jobs. It also relates to their ability to understand academic or technical literature that can improve the quality of their work, as well as their ability to communicate with colleagues or customers who come from different countries.

### ***Career Opportunities and Salary Increases***

Respondents who have good English skills through the TOEFL test report that they have a greater chance of getting promotions or job offers abroad. Some of them also reported that high English proficiency contributed to an increase in salary, as many companies offer higher salary incentives for employees who have good English skills. This is in line with research conducted by Saputra and Wijaya (2022), which states that mastery of English is often a factor that influences a company's decision to offer a higher position or a more competitive salary.

One respondent working in the financial sector revealed,  
*"My English skills, as evidenced by my high TOEFL score, have opened up opportunities for promotion in the company. In addition, I also got the opportunity to work in the company's overseas branch offices."*

This finding supports research conducted by Kurniawan (2023), which states that multinational companies tend to give higher salaries to employees who have better English skills, as this ability allows employees to work more effectively in the global market.

In an increasingly internationally connected world of work, English language proficiency allows individuals to access a wider range of career opportunities, both at home and abroad. Some companies also provide additional benefits or bonuses for employees who have excellent English skills, given the importance of efficient and smooth communication in the global business world.

### ***Challenges in Achieving TOEFL Score***

However, not all respondents found it easy to achieve an adequate TOEFL score. Some respondents revealed great challenges in obtaining a high TOEFL score, especially those who did not have a strong educational background in English. Some respondents who came from non-English majors, such as engineering or medicine, revealed that they had difficulties in preparing for the TOEFL exam, especially in the listening and speaking sections.

As suggested by Suryani and Hidayat (2022), although the TOEFL test can provide a fairly good picture of one's English proficiency, the biggest challenge lies in how individuals prepare for this test. Many respondents stated that they had to take courses or study independently to prepare for the TOEFL test. This requires a lot of time and effort, and is often an obstacle for individuals who are busy with work or other studies.

Some respondents also revealed that even though they have a good TOEFL score, they still feel not confident enough in communicating orally in English, especially in highly dynamic situations or when speaking with native speakers. This shows that although TOEFL scores can indicate overall English proficiency, there are still major challenges in its application in daily work contexts.

However, it is important to note that despite these challenges, many respondents managed to overcome these obstacles with determination and hard work. They attended TOEFL preparation courses or used English learning apps to improve their skills. In this way, they not only achieved an adequate TOEFL score but also improved their overall English proficiency.

## **DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study reveal the multifaceted role of English language proficiency, as measured by TOEFL scores, in enhancing job opportunities within the global industry sector. One key insight is the significance of English proficiency in multinational recruitment processes. Companies operating across borders often face communication challenges, making English the lingua franca for efficient operations. TOEFL scores, as a standardized measure of English proficiency, serve as a reliable indicator of a candidate's ability to adapt to a global work environment. According to respondents, multinational corporations frequently use TOEFL scores not only as a filter during initial recruitment but also as an assurance of candidates' readiness to engage in collaborative international settings. This is consistent with studies such as those by Marsidi and Hakim (2023), which emphasize the growing dependence of global industries on employees who can navigate cross-cultural communication effectively. Thus,

TOEFL scores are not just a technical requirement but a strategic asset for career advancement in a globalised world.

Beyond recruitment, the study highlights the role of English language proficiency in fostering professional growth and workplace competence. Respondents with higher TOEFL scores consistently reported greater confidence in professional activities such as leading meetings, presenting ideas, and negotiating with international clients. This resonates with findings by Alfiansyah (2022), which indicate that English language skills enable employees to contribute more actively to strategic projects and enhance their visibility within organizations. Additionally, respondents noted that TOEFL preparation improves specific skills like academic reading, formal writing, and critical listening, which are essential in many professional contexts. These competencies enable employees to handle complex tasks, engage with global industry standards, and adapt to rapidly changing professional environments. In this sense, TOEFL certification serves not only as a credential for employment but also as a tool for continuous professional development.

However, the study also sheds light on the challenges individuals face in achieving high TOEFL scores, which can hinder access to job opportunities. Many respondents, especially those without formal training in English, reported difficulties in mastering the test's components, such as speaking and listening. This aligns with Suryani and Hidayat's (2022) findings, which suggest that TOEFL preparation requires substantial investment in terms of time, effort, and financial resources. Despite these obstacles, respondents who actively pursued TOEFL preparation through courses or self-study noted significant improvements in their English proficiency, which translated into better career prospects. These findings underscore the need for educational institutions and employers to provide more accessible English training programs, ensuring equitable opportunities for individuals to compete in the global job market. The role of TOEFL, therefore, extends beyond individual ambition to broader structural support in equipping the workforce for global industry demands.

## **CONCLUSION**

English language proficiency, as measured through TOEFL scores, plays a very important role in improving job opportunities in the global industrial sector. TOEFL scores are often used by multinational companies as an indicator of adequate English communication skills. In addition, good English skills also contribute to increased professional competence, wider career opportunities, and increased salaries. Therefore, it is important for individuals to continuously improve their English skills to compete in the global job market. Companies are also expected to

further utilise the TOEFL test in the selection process to ensure that their employees can adapt to a multinational working environment.

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