

CREATIVE AND INNOVATIVE IDEAS FOR TOEFL TRAINING AND TESTING ACTIVITIES

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[Paper to be presented at the national seminar held at Ronggolawe University in Tuban ,
East Java, Indonesia on 9 September 2012]

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to suggest ways of developing and applying creative and innovative ideas for TOEFL training and testing activities in Indonesia, where alternatives to the classic ETS TOEFL test should be exploited based on general dissatisfaction with the existing official tests that are deemed too American-centred and limited in scope. The presentation of this paper is divided up into six sections, namely an introduction that ponders the pros and cons of losing and finding languages followed by more specific information on the actual purpose of TOEFL practice and testing in Indonesia and the phenomenon of hybrid forms arising wherever and whenever English is used as a Lingua Franca. Section three zooms in on the background and practice of devising simulation material and tests for the Local Equivalent to TOEFL, including advice for Indonesian English instructors planning to develop a study programme and curriculum to meet the current demand. Section four focuses on the three TOEFL exam sections (Listening Comprehension, Structure and Written Expression, and Vocabulary & Reading Comprehension) in some detail and provides concrete examples of practice materials and simulation tests, as well as Testing Points to brief students on what to expect to relieve anxiety. Section five attempts to shed some light on the controversial issue of a certain amount of resistance to the English language and Western culture prevalent in Indonesia by examining possible hidden agendas or even cultural-linguistic imperialism lurking behind the spread of Global English, while the closing section proposes several conclusions and provides suggestions vis-à-vis the immediate future of the TOEFL teaching and learning process in Indonesia.

I. INTRODUCTION: “Lost and Found”

When I left my home town in Amsterdam back in early 1989 to board an aeroplane to Indonesia as a Teacher Trainer for Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), I was mentally prepared for a certain amount of loss: I would temporarily lose my family and friends, I would exchange a cold, drizzly maritime climate for a tropical monsoon one, and in linguistic terms, I would lose the daily use of my mother tongue Dutch to focus on teaching a second language (English) as a foreign language and most excitingly, I would have to learn an exotic new language called Bahasa Indonesia for daily communication on the island where I was to live and work for two years.

“Nothing ventured, nothing gained, as the old proverb says, or “Berani hilang, tak hilang; berani mati, tak mati”, as an old Indonesian hand-reader told me. But I was not prepared for unexpected loss: my unusual itinerary from Amsterdam to London to join the English volunteers, and then back to Amsterdam to Indonesia bewildered the ground stewardess to such a degree that my suitcase was sent to Sweden, of all places. After fruitless attempts at identifying my lost luggage at Soekarno-Hatta Airport, VSO’s Field Director accompanied me to a fancy department store where he bought a set of fine gentleman’s clothes to compensate for my loss. You lose some, you win some.

And so it is with language; as far as my mother tongue Dutch was concerned, a Germanic language derived from Frankish, whose harsh guttural sounds reminded my VSO room mate Simon of a TV commercial promoting cough syrup or Fisherman’s Friend, this was no longer widely spoken after 44 years of Independence (and now, after 67 years seems to have become extinct altogether, died out along with its attractive Creole cousins *Javindo* and *Petjoh*). So I was looking forward to learning a new language that I would need for survival in a small coastal town named Tuban, where no other foreigners lived or worked.

The six-week intensive language course at Wisma Realino in Yogyakarta was based on immersion or intense exposure to the national language Bahasa Indonesia for six hours a day. Grammatical structures were clarified by way of practical examples and, most refreshingly, appropriate cultural contexts. Following the patterns of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, the highly enjoyable course was livened up with role play, anecdotes, interviews, speeches, songs, movies and vivid explanations that I remember to this day.

All this was in sharp contrast with the dull Prussian (19th century grammar-translation) method still in use at my Dutch Junior High for several Western European modern languages and compulsory dead languages such as ancient Latin and Greek. So

this communicative, culture-based approach adopted in Yogya was quite an eye-opener. After six years of High School French I was able to read philosophical novels, but remained literally speechless when somebody would strike up a conversation on a French beach or volleyball court, whereas I was able to conduct interesting conversations after the *Realino* course that took six weeks to complete.

Another refreshing and encouraging aspect of this language course was the enthusiasm of the (underpaid) teachers and the relaxed yet stimulating atmosphere they managed to create. The instructors also proved quite flexible- if you made rapid progress, you would be allowed to discuss a television programme or give a talk to new arrivals, which reminded me of the Montessori system of my Senior High School, where media and music were used to enrich the curriculum and learning by teaching junior classmates (peer teaching) was quite common.

The variety of course materials was also impressive, reflecting the different ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the teachers. During the course, all instructors pretended to be completely ignorant of English and other foreign languages as part of the immersion effort mentioned earlier. This was intended to make us think, communicate and even dream in Indonesian, a process that was to continue throughout my friendship with my esteemed counterpart at IKIP PGRI TUBAN, Pak Agus, now Professor Doctor Agus Wardhono who kindly invited me to this seminar a while ago.

Put in a nutshell, the experience of learning a foreign language by being continuously exposed by the cultural context where it sprang from would colour my own teaching style, strategies, approaches and techniques for the remainder of my career as a Teacher Trainer and English Lecturer up to the present. The happy memories of the variety of course activities according to the Communicative Approach and the fun element that spiced up the *Realino* course would inspire me to devise both alternative TOEFL course and testing materials in the same vein.

II. Purpose of TOEFL Practice and Testing in Indonesia

Strictly speaking, the Test of English as a Foreign Language is exclusively owned and administered by Educational Testing Service, founded in 1947 and headquartered near Princeton, New Jersey in the USA, with a branch in Europe. It is the world's largest private non-profit educational testing and assessment organization. In total, ETS annually administers 20 million exams in the US (including TOEFL, TOEIC and GRE) and in 180 other countries. By contrast, rival IELTS tests 1.7 million candidates annually and is recognized by universities in the UK, Canada and Australia/New Zealand and by over

7,000 institutions in more than 135 countries. ETS has been criticised as an organization, as mentioned in Wikipedia's ETS entry:

In response to growing criticism of its monopolistic power, New York state passed the Educational Testing Act, a disclosure law which required ETS to make available certain test questions and graded answer sheets to students;

Problems administering England's national tests in 2008 by ETS Europe were the subject of thousands of complaints recorded by the Times Educational Supplement. Their operations were also described as a "*shambles*" in the UK Parliament, where a financial penalty was called for. Complaints included papers not being marked properly, or not being marked at all and papers being sent to the wrong schools or lost completely but more specifically for what has been perceived as serious shortcomings of the TOEFL Tests produced so far. Doubts have been raised about the artificiality of both the language and question types used in official TOEFL tests, as in a case study described in "The TOEFL Trump Card" (Critical Inquiry in Language Studies, 2009) whose "findings indicate that a great deal of tension and ambiguity surround the TOEFL's status as an accurate measure of English language proficiency. The Toefl test was described as "full of tricks" and it was felt that the variety of English tested was not the variety of English used in day-to-day interactions with native speakers of English. Informally, an English native speaker who has taught in South Korea for decades has stated that teaching tricks (i.e. strategies) turns the EFL instructor into a trainer or lion-tamer rather than an educator, a sentiment shared by a number of American instructors who left UNPAR for that very reason. Others have discovered an opportunity to capitalize on the existence of patterns that can be "drilled" or trained to "beat the TOEFL test", such as <http://beatthetest.wordpress.com/>.

In Indonesia, the official TOEFL Test as administered by ETS is required for study abroad, initially in its Paper-based or Computer-based format, and more recently in the shape of the Internet-based TOEFL Test, which is vastly more expensive at USD 170. Universities that require a certain TOEFL score for graduation of all students in the local Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral Programmes, in addition to testing prospective academic and administrative staff members, are entitled to devise their own Local Equivalent to TOEFL tests as long as the certificates and test state explicitly that they are not endorsed, recommended or recognised by ETS.

This allows us to eliminate or at least minimise the weaknesses perceived in the "classic" ETS TOEFL tests, such as the sole use of American accents in the recordings for the Listening Comprehension section and the exclusively American-centred topics

used for the Vocabulary & Reading Comprehension section, for example. At the same time, it will stimulate us to come up with creative and innovative ideas to develop appropriate course and testing materials.

When I was a student in the 1980s, there were two main models, British English and American English but here in Asia, one cannot help but be aware of other varieties such as Singlish, Chinglish, and in the Bollywood sphere Indian English or “Shak Rukh Khan” English. In the meantime, Continental Europeans tend to use English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), which again focuses more on communication than on perfect parroting of the Queen’s English, as the Wikipedia entry on *English as a Lingua Franca* states:

The way English is used as a lingua franca is heavily dependent on the specific situation of use. Generally speaking, ELF interactions concentrate on function rather than form. In other words, communicative efficiency (i.e. getting the message across) is more important than correctness. As a consequence, ELF interactions are very often hybrid. Speakers accommodate to each other's cultural backgrounds and may also use code-switching into other languages that they know. Based on the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE) and additional research, the following features of ELF lexicogrammar have been identified:

- use of 3rd person singular zero, as in *you look very sad* and *he look very sad*
- shift in the use of articles (including some preference for zero articles) as in *our countries have signed agreement about this*
- invariant question tags as in *you’re very busy today, isn’t it?* (and use of other similar universal forms)
- treating ‘who’ and ‘which’ as interchangeable relative pronouns, as in *the picture who* or *a person which*
- shift of patterns of preposition use, for example *we have to study about*
- preference for bare and/or full infinitive over the use of gerunds, as in *I look forward to see you tomorrow*
- extension to the collocational field of words with high semantic generality, for example *take an operation*
- increased explicitness, for example *how long time* instead of *how long*

Oddly enough, no attempts seem to have been made at spelling reform as once proposed by US President Theodore Roosevelt to simplify the notoriously unphonetic spelling of the English language. Several of the simplified forms listed above are commonly used by Asians as well and it is remarkable that hybrid forms have now become a staple of television interviews with Indonesian celebrities who cheerfully tell us

that they “lagi ngenjoy life, deh!”; in the not-so-distant colonial past, Creole languages such as Javindo and Petjoh that combined the lexicogrammar of Dutch and Malay were widely spoken among Eurasians in the Dutch East Indies.

III. Background to and Practice of Devising Practice Materials and Tests for the Local Equivalent to TOEFL

When I started teaching English at UNPAR in 2000, the TOEFL Test was only used for one particular purpose, namely for testing prospective academic staff. An old TOEFL (*Arco* 1996) book featuring six practice tests was used for this, and nobody seemed to mind that the complete answer key was available at *Gramedia*, and some people may have passed by simply memorising those answers. No TOEFL Preparation courses were taught at the time, only a General English course based on a British series of excellent CA-based books entitled *Headway*. Then one faculty dean requested more challenging tests, and a more attractive variety of topics.

By the mid-2000s, TOEFL scores were increasingly used as a prerequisite for graduation all over Java, and UNPAR decided on a minimal score of 500 (60%) for all students, both graduates and under-graduates. Prospective full-time lecturers would have to reach a score of 550 (75%). A proposal to raise the TOEFL standard to 550 and 600 for Master’s and Doctoral candidates was turned down when it turned out that these middle-aged candidates scored way below their juniors (Bachelor’s candidates) due to lack of practice and their busy schedule as breadwinners, research students, and parents.

To prepare the students for this added challenge to their daily studies, UNPAR offered TOEFL Preparation courses at three levels, consisting of fourteen 100-minute practice sessions and a mid-test (UTS) and final (UAS) test. Level 1 (False beginners to Lower Intermediate) would typically attract amnesiacs, i.e. students who had miraculously forgotten practically everything they had learnt over a six-period of High School English, and middle-aged students who had not practised their English for over two decades or those who had had teachers who never spoke English in class, resulting in disastrous Listening Comprehension scores. Others had tried hard, but were left traumatised by the experience of having been stifled with endless grammar rules, drills and rote learning without any practical application to interesting contexts whatsoever, resulting in even worse Structure scores. Their poor Vocabulary/Reading Comprehension scores were blamed on lack of affordable reading materials, but since our Self-Access Centre provides these extensively and free of charge, lack of time has been cited, due to work and study-related pressure.

Level 2 (Lower to Upper Intermediate) would typically attract students with a solid background in English (more often gained from local private courses at LIA, EF, EEP or TBI than their secondary schools) who merely needed a refresher course to reach a score of 450 yielding two credit points (SKS) in their faculty and a minimal score of 500 to graduate from UNPAR. On average, 90% (18 out of 20 students) would accomplish this goal, the remaining 10% failing due to absenteeism or lack of participation.

Level 3 (Upper Intermediate to Advanced) would typically attract researchers, lecturers, and scholarship students who require more advanced grammatical/vocabulary skills for their academic writing and presentations. Since they do not really need a TOEFL score (let alone credit points), an additional course in English Writing and Presentation Skills has been developed, which has run successfully for a number of years. Not only do these academics feel more confident and appreciated, they also tend to save significant amounts of money normally spent on translation/editorial fees.

Initial testing (both simulation and official tests) were based on a hotchpotch (gado-gado) of practice tests gathered from TOEFL books published by Longman, Cliff and Barrons, unrecognisably scrambled into a fresh amalgamate until we ran out of these sources, but definitely before fiendish elements tried to deconstruct these tests to sell handy answer keys! After this experimental first semester, I have found suitable materials on the Internet (especially Wikipedia and related reference sites), books on general knowledge, mini-biographies of scientists and others.

The creative and innovative aspects have been quite inspiring, and the gratifying responses in questionnaires have added to my job satisfaction. The teaching profession in Indonesia enjoys higher social status than that in Western countries, but is generally underpaid, so this is a welcome non-material bonus. Furthermore, embedding exercises and tests in proper cultural contexts reflects the reality of Global English, which broadens our horizons more than the exclusively American contents of the classic ETS-based TOEFL corpus. Based on my experience over the past decade or so, I would advise Indonesian English instructors who are assigned to develop a similar programme to the one sketched above to adhere to the following steps:

1. Devise practice materials that appeal to students who may have different learning styles, i.e. visual, contextual, media-based, aural, oral, musical, drama/role-play-based;

2. Familiarise your students with the patterns of the TOEFL test, so they know what to expect; in practice, this will eliminate practically all of the notorious butterflies in their stomachs and black-outs due to exam nerves;
3. Focus on typical stumbling-blocks for Indonesian learners based on an in-depth analysis of common errors/weaknesses detected through simulation tests featuring all three sections, i.e. Listening Comprehension, Structure & Written Expression and Vocabulary & Reading Comprehension;
4. Keep in mind that your target is your students' ability to use English effectively in communication, not the mere mastery of theoretical knowledge of English;
5. Expand the opportunity to practice from the limited classroom to a Self-Access Center/English Corner/Library to online practice at home and/or on campus;
6. Be aware of critical/constructive input from students/lecturers/colleagues and adjust or even re-design your materials accordingly (example: Application Letter/CV or song lyrics);
7. Realise that simply telling your students what to do by prescribing is often counter-productive, as is continual correction – this will go in one ear, and out the other. Instead, derive underlying structures or principles from a description of the process involved with plenty of practical applications in meaningful contexts, and give positive feedback when students accomplish their communicative purpose.

IV. The Three TOEFL Sections

1. Listening Comprehension

Ever since the Communicative Approach stressed the importance of communicating effectively, the validity of pronunciation and of the study of basic Phonetics has been overshadowed by the adage “as long as message comes across”, which is regrettable. In my teaching experience spanning a quarter of a century, I have always regarded the negligence of incorporating phonetics/pronunciation into the curriculum comparable to throwing the baby out with the Audio-lingual bath water. An awareness of the influence of L1 (mother tongue) on the second or foreign language can be raised by showing which particular organs of speech are used in both languages. This can be accomplished in a playful manner by asking Indonesian learners to imitate Western tourists who try to speak Indonesian, and especially through exposing the students to the phonetic phenomenon of substitution, i.e. the use of L1 sounds to compensate for the L2 sounds that do not occur in L1. This is preferable to the expensive and needlessly cruel practice of operating on speech organs and referring students to

Foreign Language Speech Muscle Training Centers, as recommended by “Crazy English” instructor Li Yang in China, as reported in

[http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2008/04/28/080428fa_fact_osnos] Recording 50 voices of UNPAR staff reading out a text entitled “The Story of Arthur the Rat” used at European universities to test English pronunciation brought home to me the fact that the “Indonesian” accent detected in their reading was markedly affected by their respective vernacular languages (Sundanese, Javanese, Baline, Bataknese, etc.) rather than the national language, Bahasa Indonesia, except for speakers of Chinese descent who substituted a guttural fricative [x] for the commonly trilled R-sound.

In this charming fable, all sounds that occur in English are used, so once you have mastered these, you can pronounce them all with confidence!

PRONUNCIATION TEST: The Story of Arthur the Rat

THERE ONCE WAS A YOUNG RAT NAMED ARTHUR WHO'D NEVER TAKE THE TROUBLE TO MAKE UP HIS MIND. WHENEVER HIS FRIENDS ASKED HIM IF HE'D LIKE TO GO OUT WITH THEM, HE'D ONLY ANSWER, “I DON'T KNOW.” HE WOULDN'T SAY YES AND HE WOULDN'T SAY NO, EITHER. HE COULD NEVER LEARN TO MAKE A CHOICE. HIS AUNT HELEN SAID TO HIM, “NO-ONE'LL EVER CARE FOR YOU IF YOU CARRY ON LIKE THIS – YOU HAVE NO MORE MIND THAN A BLADE OF GRASS.” ARTHUR LOOKED WISE, BUT SAID NOTHING.

ONE RAINY DAY, THE RATS HEARD A GREAT NOISE IN THE LOFT WHERE THEY LIVED. THE PINE RAFTERS WERE ALL ROTTEN, AND AT LAST ONE OF THE JOISTS HAD GIVEN WAY AND FALLEN TO THE GROUND. THE WALLS SHOOK, AND ALL THE RATS' HAIR STOOD ON END WITH FEAR AND HORROR. “THIS WON'T DO,” SAID THE OLD RAT WHO WAS CHIEF. “I'LL SEND OUT SCOUTS TO SEARCH FOR A NEW HOME.”

THREE HOURS LATER, THE SCOUTS CAME BACK AND SAID, “WE'VE FOUND A STONE HOUSE WHICH IS JUST WHAT WE WANT: THERE'S ROOM AND GOOD FOOD FOR US ALL, THERE'S A KINDLY HORSE NAMED NELLY, A COW, A CALF, AND A GARDEN WITH AN ELM TREE.”

JUST THEN, THE OLD RAT CAUGHT SIGHT OF YOUNG ARTHUR. “ARE YOU COMING WITH US?”, HE ASKED. “I DON'T KNOW”, ARTHUR

SIGHED. “THE ROOF MAY NOT COME DOWN JUST YET.” “WELL,” SAID THE OLD RAT ANGRILY, “WE CAN’T WAIT ALL DAY FOR YOU TO MAKE UP YOUR MIND – RIGHT ABOUT FACE, MARCH!” AND OFF THEY WENT.

ARTHUR STOOD AND WATCHED THE OTHER RATS HURRY AWAY. THE IDEA OF AN IMMEDIATE DECISION WAS TOO MUCH FOR HIM. “I’LL GO BACK TO MY HOLE FOR A BIT”, HE SAID TO HIMSELF, “JUST TO MAKE UP MY MIND”. THAT NIGHT, THERE WAS A GREAT CRASH THAT SHOOK THE EARTH AND DOWN CAME THE WHOLE ROOF.

NEXT DAY, SOME MEN RODE UP AND LOOKED AT THE RUINS. ONE OF THEM MOVED A BOARD, AND UNDER IT THEY SAW A YOUNG RAT LYING ON HIS SIDE, QUITE DEAD: HALF IN, AND HALF OUT OF HIS HOLE.



A summary of common errors yielded the Top 5 of Indonesian pronunciation problems
[Live Demonstration of

1. R-sound; Rudy really appreciates rock ‘n’ roll records.
2. Aspiration of /p/, /t/, /k/; Would the politician prefer coffee to tea?
3. SH-sound; Shirley went shopping at the local supermarket to purchase Fisherman’s Friend for her cashier friend Shireen.
4. AE-sound; Only Michael Jackson used “baddest” instead of worst, but that does not matter.
5. TH-sound. Do you think that’s your dad over there, or could it be Keith looking for Kathleen?

A poem to warm up those English speech organs:

PRONUNCIATION POEM

Instructions: Read the poem below, and try out the correct pronunciation on your partner. The final words of every line rhyme, except for “bomb” and “some”, which only rhyme in American English.

WHEN THE ENGLISH TONGUE WE SPEAK
WHY IS BREAK NOT RHYMED WITH WEAK?
WON’T YOU TELL ME WHY IT’S TRUE
WE SAY SEW, BUT ALSO FEW?

AND THE MAKER OF A VERSE
CANNOT RHYME HIS HORSE WITH WORSE?
BEARD IS NOT THE SAME AS HEARD,
CORD IS DIFFERENT FROM WORD,
COW IS COW, BUT LOW IS LOW;
SHOE IS NEVER RHYMED WITH FOE.
THINK OF HOSE AND DOSE AND LOSE,
AND THINK OF GOOSE AND YET OF CHOOSE;
THINK OF COMB AND TOMB AND BOMB,
DOLL AND ROLL, AND HOME AND SOME.
AND SINCE PAY IS RHYMED WITH SAY,
WHY NOT PAID WITH SAID, I PRAY?
THINK OF BLOOD AND FOOD AND GOOD;
MOULD IS NOT PRONOUNCED LIKE COULD.
WHY IS IT DONE, BUT GONE AND LONE –
IS THERE ANY REASON KNOWN?
TO SUM IT UP, IT SEEMS TO ME
THAT SOUNDS AND LETTERS DON'T AGREE!

(Headway, Upper Intermediate Coursebook)

PRONUNCIATION EXERCISE: L/ R/ N CONTRASTS

Instructions: *Remember to curl your tongue slightly backwards to pronounce the English “rolled R” correctly. Indonesian and Mediterranean languages such as Italian and Spanish make use of a so-called “trilled R”, where the tongue moves rapidly up and down behind the teeth, rather like a plectrum playing a tremolo on the mandolin.*

Please read aloud:

1. Please read aloud a lot!
2. Rudy really appreciates Rock ‘n’ Roll records.
3. Good readers are often reluctant to read aloud; they are afraid of being ridiculed.
4. Learning languages like Russian or Rumanian can be rather tricky.
5. A lot of reading aloud is required when learning a new language.
6. Robert Richardson is a resolute learner who often frequents the library.
7. Very soon, Robert will be able to read the news on Irish television.
8. Isn't it rather irritating that silly students refuse revision?

9. Lazy students are reluctant to revise, whereas very lazy students never learn anything.
10. Eleven language students are learning to read aloud in the lecture room of Cambridge University.

PRONUNCIATION EXERCISE: Contrast between ae and e

Instructions: *The /ae/ sound in English is a so-called DIPHTHONG, i.e. a combination of two vowels, namely /A/ and /E/. Drop your jaw a little [as if looking very surprised] to accomplish this difficult sound for most foreigners. Most Indonesian speakers of English substitute an /E/ for ae, as in “Michael JEckson’s got a bEd reputation in CElifornia”, which sounds confusing, to say the least Notice that the contrast is most obvious in the major varieties of English, that is to say in American and British English. New Zealanders, Australians and South Africans tend to use very high vowels, so that their /ae/ sounds more like /e/, and their /e/ more like /i/.. as in “I ispecially like Nicole Kidman, but I’m liss fond of Mil Gibson.”*

1. Send Sam to buy some ham.
2. When he gets back we’ll have the best breakfast you’ve ever had.
3. After ham and eggs we’ll have fresh bread and blackberry jam.
4. Let’s set the table out on the verandah, and then pick some fresh apples before he gets back.
5. I never expected to see red apples so soon. Red apples are best for activating an appetite.
6. Hello, Sam! Did you manage to get some ham?
7. Let me demonstrate the best method for scrambling eggs: seven eggs and a flat-bottomed pan, a pat of best butter and a plastic spatula, not forgetting a little milk and a nice low temperature.
8. Don’t let me forget to feed the pets, especially the cats and those extravagantly dressed hamsters!
9. Cats are the best pets, at least according to Pat, my slightly mad neighbour from South Africa.
10. Abba’s South American fan club met at last, after a maddeningly long delay due to technical hitches.

Practise the following combinations:

- SCRAMBLED EGGS AND HAM, YUMMIE!

- BLACKBERRY JAM TASTES FANTASTIC!
- FRESH BREAD NEVER TASTED BETTER...
- BREAKFAST HAM AND SEVEN EGGS MAKE
- OUR ELEVEN CATS INCREDIBLY FAT...
- SAM IS THE FAT FELLOW WHO ALWAYS GETS US THE BEST APPLES

The ensuing exercises focus on distinguishing between Minimal Pairs [*Faux Amis*] in either playful contexts (like the phonetician's riddle or rhyme above) or meaningful ones to prepare students for the deliberately misleading soundalikes in Part A of the Listening Comprehension section.

Accents used as models in the past included BBC English/Received Pronunciation (RP), sometimes (misleadingly) referred to as "The Queen's English" for European learners and Standard American English for others. As it happens, 66% of the world's native speakers of English live in the USA. Acculturation refers to the need to belong to the target language group, and even though some Indonesian students may want to sound like Britney Spears, Lady Gaga or Johnny Depp and the general impression of English as an arrogant or even satanic language has now changed into a fashionable, trendy language, politico-cultural and religious reservations remain.

As it stands, many Asian speakers of English opt for a variety that is understandable, retaining a flavour of their native accent so as not to lose their identity altogether and run the risk of ending up sounding like a cowboy or English soccer player. Incidentally, personal, informal research conducted in England when I studied at the University of Exeter revealed to me that native speakers are more irritated by lack of intonation and stress patterns in the speech of foreigners than by the occasional grammatical slip.

Parts B and C of the Listening Comprehension test are frequently mistaken by candidates as memory tests, but note-taking is allowed and should be practised thoroughly. Students need to take selective notes, that is to say based on their anticipation of the WH-question about the longer conversation or talk/lecture/announcement they are going to hear.

Example:

TOEFL strategy: ANTICIPATION

Before listening to Part B and C, take a quick look at the answers while the instructions are being read out, to get an idea of what is important in the longer

conversations and talks. As all questions are bound to be so-called WH-questions, which one would you expect?

WHO – refers to either the speaker/announcer/lecturer, or to the listener/audience, or the person who is highlighted in the talk

WHAT – refers to the topic, purpose or aim of the conversation or talk/lecture/announcement

WHEN – refers to the time, frequency or era being discussed

WHERE – refers to the setting (place/venue) of the conversation or talk/lecture/announcement

WHY – refers to the background of the conversation or talk/lecture/announcement

HOW – refers to the manner or style of the conversation or talk/lecture/announcement

A certain amount of memorization can be practised through listening to or reading a story or collection of facts, re-telling the main points involved and answering basic WH-questions.

Example:

READ, MEMORISE, RETELL, AND ANSWER:

The Museum of Failures

- A) 1. The man in the picture is Robert McMath. Right behind him are products you usually find in a supermarket. But he is not in a supermarket. He is in a museum. Mr McMath is the director of the Museum of Failures, a special museum in New York. The museum has about 75,000 products that failed. The products were in stores, but not many people bought them. The companies stopped making the products, and they are not in stores anymore. Now they are in his museum.
2. Mr McMath is holding a can of *Silly String* – the product that failed. *Silly String* is a toy. Children push a button on top of the can, and a ring of pink plastic comes out. The toy was popular for a short time. Children liked to play with the pink plastic string. They also liked to eat it! That was a problem. Parents simply stopped buying *Silly String*, and the product failed.
- B) 1. Products fail for many different reasons. Some fail because their names are not good. A few years ago, a company made a new shampoo. The shampoo had yogurt in it, so the company named it Yogurt Shampoo. It wasn't exactly popular. Perhaps people thought, "Yogurt Shampoo? Is it something for my hair, or something to eat?". Yogurt Shampoo is now on a shelf in Mr McMath's museum.
2. Another product in his museum is mayonnaise in a tube. Americans didn't buy it. They thought, "Toothpaste comes from a tube. Mayonnaise comes from a glass

jar.” They didn’t buy the mayonnaise because they didn’t like the packaging or found it confusing.

In the recordings of the Listening Comprehension tests, a variety of accents is used, using both Native Speakers from various English-speaking countries and Indonesian English lecturers who have studied/lived abroad, which is much more representative of Global English than the exclusively American monopoly used hitherto.

A greater variety of topics is introduced in the Local Equivalent to TOEFL tests and practice material, but the questions still follow the patterns of the classic paper-based TOEFL tests published by ETS, and prospective candidates are made aware of these patterns. If the language used in these tests is generally based on academic language and typical campus-based conversations, the question arises why the first ten brief statements of part A should be completely unrelated phrases and by the same token, why the following twenty short dialogues should lack any logical cohesion. As one student expressed it, “It’s like listening to a drunk or seriously brain-damaged person”. The same applies to the sentences used in both parts of the Structure & Written Expression section, which may well cover 40 different topics to be digested in twenty-five minutes. No wonder test-takers frequently look utterly exhausted after completing the first two sections.

C) Structure & Written Expression

This is the next-biggest stumbling block for Indonesian students, despite years of almost exclusive focus on drilling grammatical patterns that look like mathematical or chemical formulas in High School, or perhaps because of these context-less drills. For meaningless theory will be as easily forgotten as a pop song without a catchy melody. It is important to realise that not all items mentioned on the list of Testing Points (15 for Part 1 Sentence Completion and another 15 for Part 2 Error Identification pose problems, so I decided to draw up a list of typically Indonesian common errors derived from 800 abstracts I re-translated or edited, application letters and CVs, and articles, theses and books written by researchers or lecturers. The unrealistic “isolated” sentences of the ETS TOEFL tests were replaced by texts that show continuity, in other words text reflecting the reality of academic textbooks, and display an attractive variety of topics derived from the world of culture, science, world news and even politics.

Example of Testing Points:

TESTING POINTS: STRUCTURE & WRITTEN EXPRESSION (Q 1-40)

PART 1: Sentence Completion

1. Noun Phrase

2. Word order (Syntax)
3. Subject + Verb
4. Verb/Verb Phrase
5. Adjective Phrase/Clause
6. Conjunction
7. Parallel Construction
8. Adverb Phrase/Clause
9. Comparison
10. Infinitive/Gerund
11. Preposition/Prepositional Phrase
12. Superlative
13. Negative
14. Conditional
15. Pronoun

PART 2: Error Identification

1. Word Form
2. Verb
3. Pronoun
4. Parallel Construction
5. Singular/Plural Noun
6. Mistaken Words
7. Unnecessary Word
8. Omitted Word
9. Preposition
10. Reversed Words
11. Conjunction
12. Infinitive/Gerund
13. Comparative
14. Article
15. Superlative

Example of Simulation Test:

SECTION 2: STRUCTURE & WRITTEN EXPRESSION (Q 1-40)

Part 1: Sentence Completion (Q 1-15)

Instructions: In each of the following fifteen (15) sentences, one part indicated by an underlined blank (_____) is missing. Decide which of the four options (A, B, C, or D) would best complete the sentence, and fill in (blacken) the corresponding oval on your answer sheet. Please make sure you leave NO multiple answers or blanks, and do not write in this test booklet. Good luck!

1. Kepler-16b (formally Kepler-16 (AB)-b, _____ referred to as *Tatooine*) is an extrasolar planet.
(A) not official (B) non-official (C) official it is not (D) unofficially
2. It is a Saturn-mass planet _____ half rock and half gas, and it orbits a binary star, Kepler-16, with a period of 229 days.
(A) consist of (B) of consistence (C) consisting of (D) consisted
3. It is the first confirmed, unambiguous example of a circumbinary planet – a planet orbiting _____ one, but two stars," said Josh Carter of the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, one of the discovery team.
(A) none (B) not (C) no-no (D) nothing
4. The planet _____ using the space observatory aboard NASA's Kepler spacecraft.
(A) was discovered (B) discovery (C) discovering (D) cover girl
5. Scientists were able to detect the planet using the transit method, when they noticed the dimming of one of the system's stars _____ the other was not eclipsing it.
(A) when evenly (B) when evening (C) even when (D) ifs and whens
6. Furthermore, _____ all the eclipses and transits of the planet and stars in the system has allowed for unusually high precision in the calculations of the sizes and masses of objects in the Kepler-16 system.
(A) timing (B) time (C) timed (D) timer
7. _____, Laurance Doyle of the SETI Institute in Mountain View, California, said of this precision, "I believe this is the best-measured planet outside the solar system."
(A) The lead of the discovery planet's team

- (B) The leader of the team’s discovery planet
(C) The lead-in of the team’s discovery planet
(D) The leader of the planet’s discovery team
8. Kepler-16b is also unusual in that it falls inside the radius that was thought _____ the inner limit for planet formation in a binary star system.
(A) to been (B) to being (C) to be (D) was
9. According to Sara Seager, a planetary expert at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, it was thought that for a planet to have a stable orbit around such a system, it would need to be _____ seven times as far from the stars as the stars are from each other, whereas Kepler-16b's orbit is only about half that distance.
(A) at least (B) at lastly (C) at less (D) at lesser
10. As seen from Earth, the planet will cease transiting one star as soon ____ 2014, and will stop crossing the second and brighter star in 2018.
(A) like (B) dislike (C) as (D) than
11. After that, the planet will remain undetectable using the transit method until around 2042, if _____ correctly.
(A) predicts (B) predicted (C) prediction (D) prejudice
12. In the announcement paper, the discovery team stated: “Following the convention of Ref. 22, we can denote the third body Kepler-16 (AB)-b, _____.
(A) or simply ‘b’ when is there no ambiguity”
(B) or ‘b’ simply when no is there ambiguity”
(C) or simply ‘b’ when there is no ambiguity”
(D) simply or ‘b’ is when there no ambiguity”
13. It is listed as Kepler-16 (AB)-b on the SIMBAD Astronomical Database, though The Extrasolar Planets Encyclopaedia lists ____ as Kepler-16 (AB) b.
(A) her (B) its (C) his (D) it

14. Astronomers have informally referred ____ Kepler-16b as "Tatooine," after the fictional planet orbiting two suns that is a key setting in the *Star Wars* film series.

(A) by (B) to (C) in (D) at

15. "Again and again we see that the science is stranger and weirder _____ fiction" said John Knoll, a visual effects supervisor at Industrial Light & Magic who worked on several of the movies.

(A) as (B) likes (C) than (D) then

SECTION 2: STRUCTURE & WRITTEN EXPRESSION (Q 1-40)

Part 2: Error Identification (Q 16-40)

Instructions: *In each of the twenty-five (25) sentences below, four parts (marked A, B, C, and D) have been underlined. Decide which particular part contains an error, and fill in (blacken) the corresponding oval on your answer sheet. Please make sure you leave NO multiple answers or blanks, and do not write in this test booklet. Good luck!*

16. Leonora Carrington, who has death aged 94, led a life almost as picaresque and

A B C

surreal as her art.

D

17. Born in British, she eloped with Max Ernst, hung out with Picasso and Dali, fled the

A B C

Nazis, and escaped from a Spanish psychiatric hospital.

D

18. Later Carrington settled in Mexico, where she built a reputation as one of the most

A B

originallest and visionary British artists and writers of the 20th century.

C D

19. Leonora Carrington built up a massive international reputation, especial in America

A B

and Mexico, but in her native Britain she was comparatively neglected, despite her

C

acknowledged importance as one of the few female exponents of Surrealism.

D

20. The only girl in a family of boys, Leonora Carrington was born at April 6, 1917.

A B C D

21. Her father was an Anglo-Irish Protestant textile magnate, while her mother was a

A B

Catholic Roman beauty from southern Ireland.

C D

22. The family home was a rambling gothic mansion called Crookhey Hall, a house

A B

who's sinister towers, chimneys and gables feature in some of her paintings.

C D

23. As a child she was looked by an Irish nanny, who gave her a love of Irish

A B C D

folklore.

24. School discipline comed as a shock, and she was expelled from one Roman Catholic

A B

convent after another due to her eccentricity and anti-social tendencies.

C D

25. The one thing she did learn was a love of art, even though her father was not keen on

A

her going to art school (artists live in garrets and die of starvation, he say), but her

B C D

mother intervened.

26. On Mrs Penrose's Academy of Art in Florence, she was exposed to the Italian

A B C

Renaissance masters, whose love of rich colours were to inspire her later work.

D

27. She returned to England brimming with enthusiasm, butts her father insisted she

A B

should prepare for a conventional role in life by doing the Season.

C D

28. A ball was held in her honour at the Ritz, and she was presented to King George V in

A

B

an agonisingly tight ostrich feather tiara that she threatened to off rip.

C

D

29. A few years later she fantasised about a more prettier girl who befriends a female

A

B

hyena on the zoo and decides to have it take her place at her debutante ball.

C

D

30. The debutante assists in preparing a disguise for the animal, becoming a willing

A

B

accomplice in the murder of her maid, Mary, whose face the hyena wears after eat the

C

D

rest of her.

31. Leonora plunged recklessly into Surrealist Paris life, displaying her outrageously

A

B

C

eccentric humour of sense.

D

32. She sitted at a restaurant table, covered her feet with mustard, and served cold

A

B

C

tapioca dyed with squid ink to guests as caviar.

D

33. Visitors to her studio might wake up in the morning to a breakfast of omelette full of

A

their own hair which she had cut while they sleped.

B

C

D

34. With her wild, dark beauty she looked the perfect submissive *femme enfant* or child

A

woman, but she rejected the notion of be anyone's muse and was quick to snap if

B

C

anyone took her for granted.

D

35. The great Salvador Dali won her approval by calling her "a most important woman

A

B

artist", and her work was shown at exhibitions along with the work of Meret Oppenheim,

C

Remedios Varo, Eileen Agar and other woman.

D

36. At an age of 23, abroad and alone, Leonora Carrington had a mental breakdown,

A

B

C

weeping for several hours.

D

37. A trip to Spanish in search of a visa for her German husband ended in her

A

B

incarceration in a local mental institution, where she was treated with *Cardiazol*, a

C

dangerous drug which induced spasms and hallucinations.

D

38. A short biography included the unlikely sentence: "Subjected to horrifying treatment

A

B

in an asylum, she was miraculously rescued by her nanny who arrival in a submarine."

C

D

39. With its Aztec and Mayan history and its cult of the dead corpse, Mexico suited

A

B

Leonora Carrington much better, giving her new inspiration and a new circle of friends.

C

D

40. She liked to poke fun at an earlier generation of male Surrealists: "Even Buckingham

A

B

Palace has a large reproduction of Magritte's famous ham of slice with an eye peering out

C

- it hangs, I believe, in the throne room."

D

To deal with the most problematic items, a list of Golden Rules is supplied in every coursebook and at the SAC, covering testing points such as Unnecessary Word, Omitted Word, Gerund vs Infinitive, confused word forms and mixed tenses.

Example:

STRUCTURE & WRITTEN EXPRESSION: GOLDEN RULES

N.B. * = ungrammatical sentence => = should be

Rule # 1: *Do not combine "2-in-1" i.e. the simple and the continuous forms.*

Examples:

* I working at BIP for a couple of weeks => I'm working/I've been working

* I'm teach at UNPAR's Language Laboratory => I teach

* My daughter was play chess when the phone was ring => My daughter was playing chess when the phone rang

*P.A. Toer born in Central Java => was born

Rule # 2: *When there is an indicator of time referring to a fixed point in the past, use the past tense.*

Examples:

* Last week I have bought a Jazz CD => I bought

* In the 1990s there are as many as 12 native speakers of English at UNPAR => there were

* In medieval times, people often burning witches => burnt

* An American friend of mine go straight to Nias to help out when he hearing about the disaster => went, heard

Rule # 3: *After a preposition, use the gerund (ING-form) instead of the whole verb (TO-infinitive) or the so-called bare infinitive (without TO).*

Examples:

* I look forward to hear from you soon => to hearing

* After to watch TV, my neighbour likes to chat => watching

* This particular utensil is used for fry => frying

* Before read the article, let's take a look at the headline => reading

Rule # 4: *Adverbs may modify adjectives, verbs and other adverbs, or comment on the rest of the sentence.*

Examples:

She's *really* sweet.

Although I once met them, I don't *really* know Inka Christie and Chintami Atmanegara.

On her last tour, Shakira sang *incredibly* well.

Regrettably, some of the survivors did not make it to the hospital.

Generally speaking, Asians are cheerful and friendly.

Strangely enough, the King and new Queen of Dangdut became enemies.

Interesting reading texts are provided to distinguish between word forms, with two options.

Example:

TOEFL PREPARATION COURSE @FLP/PPB/Unpar 2012

MINI-BIOGRAPHY: Garrison Keillor

Instructions: Choose which of the two options (printed in CAPITALS) is correct by boxing or highlighting it. Compare your choices with your classmate.

Garrison Keillor (born Gary Edward Keillor AT/ON August 7, 1942 in Anoka, Minnesota) is an American author, storyteller, humorist, columnist, musician, satirist, and radio PERSONNEL/PERSONALITY. He is best known AS/LIKE host of the Minnesota Public Radio show *A Prairie Home Companion*, WHOM/WHICH is also broadcast in Britain, Australia, and Ireland as *Garrison Keillor's Radio Show*.

He was RAISED/RISEN in a family belonging to the Plymouth Brethren, a fundamentalist Christian denomination he has since left. He is currently an Episcopalian, but has been a Lutheran. He often uses his religious roots in his fiction. He graduated OF/FROM the University of Minnesota with a Bachelor's Degree in English in 1966. He BEGAN/BEGUN his broadcasting career on the student-operated radio station known today as Radio K.

He is six feet, three inches (1.9 m) HEIGHT/TALL, and is partly of Scottish descent. Keillor has been MARRIED/MARRIAGE three times. His second wife was a Danish exchange student ON/AT Keillor's high school, WHOM/WHOSE he famously re-encountered at a class reunion.

On 3 February, 2008, Keillor ENDORSED/ENDORSEMENT Barack Obama in the Democratic Primary. In a letter to the Obama campaign, Keillor stated "I'm happy to SUPPORTER/SUPPORTt your candidacy, which is so full of promise for our country. In the Caucuses held on 5 February, Minnesota Democrats PICKED/PICKING Obama ACROSS/OVER rival presidential candidate Hillary Rodham Clinton TO/BY a 2-to-1 margin.

Keillor has many NOTABLED / NOTEWORTHY ancestors, INCLUDED / INCLUDING Joseph Crandall, who made progress in the study of Native American languages and was also an associate of the FINDER/FOUNDER of the first American Baptist church and of Prudence Crandall, who founded the first African-American women's school in America.

Students are asked to complete a variety of assignments such as editing application letters, CVs and abstracts or interviewing one another or the instructor during a TOEFL Preparation course or at the SAC.

Example of error-riddled phrases in application letters:

COMMON ERRORS: Curriculum Vitae/Resume/Application Letter

Instructions: Rewrite the following ungrammatical sentences taken from real students' letters. Check the spelling mistakes as well.. The errors are mainly caused by so-called interference (*kontaminasi*) from Indonesian. Good luck!

1. I primaly interest with Scientist book.
2. I can to communicate efektif.
3. I can to speak Jawa, Sunda, and some Spain.
4. I have been Mathematic and Informatica instruktur until 2002.
5. My adres is Cikendi Str., 11th at Bandung.
6. My reward of Rp. 1.000.000 can be discuss, off course.
7. I able to work computer literacy.
8. I can analisa good and teamworking.
9. I'm send you mine sertifikat and transkrip and the others professional qualified's.
10. I all way reddy to joint yours company.
11. I have gained lot of experiance and hard worker.
12. My hobi's is to find the fishes my self and going to restaurant to eat many cow.
13. I ever work as Fistic teacher for Junior High.
14. Please you find my CV and Resume inclosed.
15. I like to apply for position of Risk Manajemen Oficer or else that suit with my education back ground and the skill.
16. Dear MisterYour sincerely!
17. I'm graduate from Katolick Parahyangan Uni, and my major Int'l Relationship.
18. My script was receive real good by my supervise.

Simulation tests are provided at this centre free of charge, and weaknesses can be discussed with the English instructor individually or in small groups as part of the free facilities the Continuing Education Center offers on a daily basis. In my experience, it takes only a few weeks of daily study to prepare students for this section of the TOEFL test, and many students are able to pass the entire test even if their Listening

Comprehension score is mediocre, since a high Structure score may compensate for the latter as long as the total score adds up to $1500/3=500$.

If the testing point “Reversed Syntax” proves problematic, an exercise featuring so-called jumbled sentences is applied, whose correct outcome may be good advice, as below:

SYNTAX: JUMBLED SENTENCES

Instructions: *Rearrange the sentences below into correct sentences and select three that appeal to you. Motivate your choice.*

1. MORE – AGE – UNDER – AGE – SEVENTY – SIX – SPEND – OVER – TIME – PEOPLE – WITH – OF – OF – AND – THE – THE.
2. SMILE – MAKE – LEAST – EACH – THREE – ONE – WORKMATES – TRY – DAY – TO – AT – OF – YOUR – GUFFAW – AND – YOUR.
3. WASTE – THE – PAST – NEGATIVE – GOSSIP – DON’T – ISSUES – THOUGHTS – OR – ON – ENERGY – YOUR – OF – PRECIOUS.
4. SCHOOL – LIFE – PROBLEMS – CURRICULUM – PART – THAT – REALISE – THAT – SIMPLY – ARE – AND – THE – OF – IS – A.
5. KING – BREAKFAST – BEGGAR – DINNER – AND – LIKE – A – A – LIKE – EAT.
6. SERIOUSLY! – ELSE – YOURSELF – DON’T – DOES... - TAKE – NO-ONE – SO.
7. NONE – PEOPLE – BUSINESS – WHAT – THINK – OTHER – YOU – YOUR IS – OF – OF.
8. ONLY – VIEW – THE – RIDE – ENJOY – LIFE – YOU – THROUGH – AND – SO – HAVE – ONE – OF – IT – THE – MOST – MAKE.

The most realistic and enjoyable way of putting grammar into practice remains the personal interview, though; but is important to realise that in CLT “the communicative approach is deemed a success if the teacher understands the student. But if the teacher is

from the same region as the student, the teacher will understand errors resulting from an influence from their first language. Native speakers of the target language may still have difficulty understanding them” [Wikipedia entry on CLT Criticism]. This is why common errors should be pre-taught or used in post-interview evaluation, as in the example from my Level 2 TOEFL Preparation coursebook below:

INTERVIEW ASSIGNMENT

Instructions: *Interview your partner about his/her past, present and future – make sure you use the appropriate tenses! Take a look at the suggestions below and elaborate. Have fun!*

PAST: D.O.B., social and geographical background, education, extracurricular activities (sports, reading, Music, travel, etc.)

PRESENT: Personality, star sign/zodiac, current activities on and off campus, marital status, likes and dislikes (fave movie, TV programme, music and so on), reason for taking an English language course.

FUTURE: Career prospects, family life, goals in life

N.B. Try to avoid making the common errors (sampled from real mistakes made by students over the years) listed below:

* = ungrammatical sentence => should be changed into

== ERRONEOUS ==

I'm born at Bogor on 1978

I schooled in Medan, then gone to Jawa

I was attend basic school in Bandung

I come from an intellect family but I only reading comics Japan

I can to swim and good in play computer

I enjoy to read scientist book and horror

I never been to another country, but I ever been to Bali

I go to the Dutch but no time for travel to German

CORRECT

I was born in Bogor in 1978

I went to school in Medan before going to Java

I attended primary/elementary school in B.

Although I come from an intellectual family, I only read Japanese comics

I can swim and am good at operating/using computers

I enjoy reading science books and horror fiction

I have never been abroad, but I have been to Bali/I once went to Bali

I went to Holland, but didn't have time to travel to Germany

I like ways of the Inul boring	I like the way Inul bumps and grinds/struts her stuff
Mine friend like the star at <i>Baywatch</i> because of she has the big milk	My friend likes the <i>Baywatch</i> star because of her large bosom/well-developed bust
I very fond of <i>Bakmi/Bapkao</i> , special on afternoon	I'm really fond of noodles and steamed rolls, especially in the afternoon
I'm current write on my script	I'm currently writing up my mini-thesis/final paper
I hope to married after graduate and have many childs; if son twice, if daughter four	I hope to marry/get married after graduating and have lots of children, preferably two sons and four daughters
The instructor may never interrupt the conversation between interviewer and interviewee, just let it flow!	

D) Vocabulary & Reading Comprehension

This particular section happens to appear least prominently in students' nightmares, mainly because it is part of the High School curriculum so that they are familiar with the format. Once again, more up-to-date global topics ought to replace the exclusively American ones and certainly the uninspiring ones that have apparently been preserved for even the Internet-based TOEFL test if the following recent oral comment is anything to go by: "I was not allowed to eat or drink during the test, so I felt hungry and thirsty but to add insult to injury, the topics and questions of the the Reading Comprehension section bored me to tears." To prepare test candidates for the Vocabulary section (50% or 25 items), they are made aware of certain recurring patterns in the multiple choice options, such as "odd one out" and to recognise (or rather, beware of) soundalikes/lookalikes, antonyms and distracters (answers that draw attention but happen to be out of context). The List of Testing Points or Question Types covering Vocabulary & Reading Comprehension informs the students about what to expect in the other half of the test.

Example:

VOCABULARY & READING COMPREHENSION

11 Question Types:

1. Main Idea

Almost every passage begins with a main idea question, in other words you have to find the main topic. This question may also take the form of alternative titles for the passage.

NB. Try to avoid answer options that are either too detailed or too general.

2. Inference

In these kinds of questions, the answer is not stated directly in the text. Usually you must read several sentences to understand the inference.

3. Restatement

In these questions, the answer might be found directly in the text, or it might use synonyms or a restructuring of the grammatical construction in the text.

4. Vocabulary

These questions test your ability to choose a synonym for a word or phrase as it is used in a passage. Typical questions are:

- X could best be replaced by which of the following?
- The author uses the word X in line 10 to mean which of the following?
- The word X in line 10 is most similar to which of the following?
- Which of the following is closest in meaning to X?

Always examine the immediate context in which these vocabulary items appear, for words may have different meanings in different contexts! Approximately **half** of the questions in this section of the TOEFL test focus on Vocabulary, so it is a good idea to read as much as possible with a proper English-English dictionary at your elbow by way of preparation!

5. Negative Question

A negative question asks for something that does **not** appear in the passage. There will be three (3) answers that are right, but you must choose the one that is *wrong*.

6. Referent

For this type of question you must decide which word or phrase a pronoun is referring to. Usually you look to the previous noun or phrase for the answer.

7. Author's Attitude/Opinion/Purpose

In this type of question you are not looking for a specific answer in the passage. Instead, you read to find what the author might be implying. How does the author seem to feel about the passage? What is the author trying to do? "What is the **tone** of the passage?" is also a common question to be expected.

8. Organisation

This type of question asks either about the general organization of the passage or the location of specific information in the passage.

9. **Preceding/ Following Topic**

For this type of question you must infer what may have come just before (preceding topic) or what might come after (following topic) the passage. Use the clues in the beginning or end of the passage to help you guess the topic.

10. **Support**

This type of question is similar to the Main Idea question mentioned above, except that it asks about a detail instead of the whole passage.

11. **Analogy**

For this fairly uncommon type of question you need to understand the relationship between two things mentioned in the passage and two other things.

Summarising texts and deciding on a suitable title or theme are also to be practised, as are Textual Organisation questions and rephrasing techniques.

Example of Simulation test passage with questions:

SECTION 3: VOCABULARY & READING COMPREHENSION (Q 1-50) [55 mins.]

Instructions: *In this section you will read several passages. Each passage is followed by a number of questions about it. Choose the **one** best answer (A, B, C, or D) for each question. Then, fill in (blacken) the corresponding oval on your answer sheet. Make sure you leave NO multiple answers or blanks, and please do not write or leave any marks in this test booklet.*

Answer all questions following a passage on the basis of what is stated or implied in that passage. Good luck!

Passage 1 (Q 1-10):

Michel Nostradamus was a 16th-century French **physician** and astrologer. His modern followers see him as a prophet. His prophecies have a magical quality for those who study them: They are muddled and obscure before the predicted event, but somehow become **crystal** clear after the event has occurred.

After the terrorist skyjackings and attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001, a rumor was spread that Nostradamus had predicted **them**. The following quatrain was offered as proof:

In the new city of York there will be a great collapse,

Two twin brothers torn apart by chaos

While the fortress falls the great leader will succumb

The third big war will begin when the big city is burning.

However, this turned out to have been written in 1997 by **one** Neil Marshall, a Canadian student. Marshall wanted "to demonstrate ... that the writings of Nostradamus are so **cryptic** that they can be interpreted to mean almost anything." If we have some imagination, we can **shoehorn** just about any event to some passage in Nostradamus, or to lyrics by the American songwriter Bob Dylan, for that matter. Two decades before the 9/11 attack, Dylan wrote a song called *Angelina*, which is as "**clear**" a prediction as anything Nostradamus wrote, rearranged as follows:

In the valley of the giants where the stars and stripes explode
There's a black Mercedes rolling through the combat zone;
Your servants are half-dead, you're down to the bone.
Tell me, tall men, where would you like to be overthrown?
I see pieces of men marching; trying to take heaven by force
I can see the unknown rider; I can see the pale white horse
In God's truth tell me what you want and you'll have it of course
Just step into the arena
Beat a path of retreat up those spiral staircases
Pass the tree of smoke, pass the angel with four faces
Begging God for mercy and weeping in unholy places

1. The term "physician" as used in the opening line of the passage refers to someone who has studied which of the following?
 - (A) Architecture
 - (B) Medicine
 - (C) Physics
 - (D) Physical Education
2. How does adding "crystal" to the adjective "clear" modify its meaning?
 - (A) It ridicules
 - (B) It understates
 - (C) It weakens
 - (D) It intensifies
3. To which of the following does the personal pronoun "them" as used in the opening line of paragraph 2 refer?
 - (A) The United States of America
 - (B) Terrorist skyjackings and attacks
 - (C) American presidents

- (D) Prophets like Nostradamus
4. The adverbial disjunct “However” as used in the opening line of paragraph 3 serves to indicate
- (A) similarity
 - (B) humor
 - (C) style
 - (D) contrast
5. The determiner “one” as used in the same sentence serves to
- (A) introduce a certain person unknown to the author
 - (B) make fun of a person known to the author
 - (C) put the author himself in the limelight
 - (D) deny the existence of the person mentioned
6. The adjective “cryptic” as used in the next sentence is most similar in meaning to which of the following?
- (A) Mystifying
 - (B) Clarifying
 - (C) Cleansing
 - (D) Crippling
7. The verb “shoehorn” as used in the next sentence refers to
- (A) the act of buying second-hand shoes
 - (B) fitting something for a specific or new purpose
 - (C) wearing out old shoes to buy new ones
 - (D) discarding new ideas to cling to traditional ones
8. Which of the lyrics taken from Bob Dylan’s song coincide best with the image of the 9/11 terrorist attack?
- (A) The first line (“In the valley ... explode”)
 - (B) The second line (“There’s a black ... zone”)
 - (C) The sixth line (“I can see ... horse”)
 - (D) The eighth line (“Just ... arena”)
9. Which of the following statements is UNTRUE?
- (A) The author is not exactly a follower of Nostradamus
 - (B) Nostradamus was an expert in the field of Astrology
 - (C) The Canadian student Neil Marshall quoted Nostradamus from memory
 - (D) Bob Dylan’s lyrics can be made to look as prophetic as Nostradamus’ writings by sufficiently imaginative people

10. The author has put the adjective “clear” in quotation marks in the final paragraph before the song text to indicate

- (A) seriousness
- (B) irony
- (C) evidence
- (D) the original source

V. Resistance to the English Language in Indonesia

This has been a hot topic ever since President Sukarno sent the Javanese pop band *Koes Plus* to gaol for having introduced “decadent Western values” through their fairly innocuous love songs. On an official state visit to President Kennedy’s White House, Sukarno called the music and lyrics of The Beatles a form of cultural imperialism, adding that he would cut their hair if they came to Indonesia. It shows us once more how language is inextricably linked to culture, and cannot be studied in a vacuum. The objections raised may also be employed in a more beneficial and constructive way by discussing them in detail rather than indiscriminately waving banners that accuse English of being a satanic language, as I personally witnessed in Jombang in 1996, when the Minister of Education and Culture, a Madurese professor named Wardiman Djojonegoro was paying a visit. Incidentally, he refrained from giving any comment on this fairly threatening slogan, and merely smiled placidly.

But Westerners are also aware of the imperialistic threat, exposing the global spread of English as a form of cultural imperialism or Linguicism (a term coined by the eminent British scholar Robert Phillipson), a device for surreptitious introduction of hidden agendas, be they of a political, religious, socio-cultural or even economic nature, i.e. the CIA interfering with Indonesian national politics by backing General Suharto fed by fears of the so-called Domino Theory, posting American English instructors to keep track of the activities conducted and ideologies promoted at Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), promoting a mindlessly consumerist lifestyle through an avalanche of commercials that recommend unhealthy and addictive products such as Marlboro cigarettes (containing 17% more tar and nicotine, especially produced for the Asian market now that American smokers are quitting for health reasons), fast food leading to obesity and diabetes mellitus, soft drinks and candy products that have been ruining the teeth of two generations, and a promiscuous, irresponsible and by local religious standards immoral lifestyle for youngsters promoted through social or dating websites such as Facebook, sponsored by (surprise, surprise) condom manufacturers.

An innovative and creative solution has been to use these issues as topics for discussion, reading texts and eventually writing assignments.

Example “Supersize Me”:

SECTION 3: VOCABULARY & READING COMPREHENSION (Q 1-20)

Instructions: Decide **which** of the four options (A, B, C, or D) is closest in meaning to the underlined vocabulary items in the excerpted article “Take three burgers a day” below, and fill in (blacken) the corresponding oval on your answer sheet. Make sure you leave no multiple answers or blanks, and please do not write in your test booklet. Good luck!

TAKE THREE BURGERS A DAY

Morgan spurlock ate nothing but mcdonald’s food for a month. The result? One flabby film-maker, a fascinating documentary and a company that may now be changing its ways. By Lawrence Donegan (The Observer)

“Sometimes an idea comes along that is so beautiful in its simplicity, so perfect in execution, that the entire movie community is reduced to blubbing adulation. In November 2002 Morgan Spurlock, a 33-year-old New York film-maker, had such an idea.

Spurlock, whose career has included stints as a corporate spokesman for Sony Electronics, an award-winning playwright and a beach volleyball commentator, was watching the news when an item came on about two teenagers who were suing McDonald’s for making them obese. “I was stuffed with Thanksgiving turkey, watching this story, when it hit me,” he recalls.

Spurlock’s big idea was that for a whole month he would eat nothing but McDonald’s food. There were three other ground rules: he had to eat every item on the McDonald’s menu at least once; he could only eat what was available over the counter (no special orders); and he had to “super size” his meal whenever the option was offered. He would record the state of his health prior to his new diet and afterwards. If nothing else, the exercise might shed light on the teenagers’ claims that fast food can seriously damage your health.

The outcome was *Super Size Me*, a 98-minute documentary that follows Spurlock from pre-McDonald’s health and cheer to a post-McDonald’s pit of dire health, spiritual listlessness and borderline impotency. He was tested beforehand by three doctors and deemed to be an above-average human specimen. In the first week he put on 10 lbs (4.5 kg). After the month he had added a total of 25 lbs. His cholesterol level rose by 65 points (a third higher than when he started). Most shocking of all, his doctors, who

begged the film-maker to abandon the experiment after three weeks, concluded that the constant intake of fast food was causing serious liver damage. In the film's postscript Spurlock notes that it took him 14 months to return to his former physical condition.

Spurlock's film is much more than a medical journal. He is an engaging screen presence, with a nice line in self-deprecation and perfect comic timing. In one scene he is filmed eating his first "super sized" meal in the front of his car. It begins with him gleefully rubbing his hands at the gargantuan size of the portions...and ends with him vomiting out of the car window.

VOCABULARY ITEMS:

1. FLABBY

A) flabbergasted B) fabulous C) having soft, loose flesh C) mouldy

2. ENTIRE

A)complete B) fatigued C) minor D) professional

3. BLUBBERING

A) critical B) sentimental C) understated D) bloody-minded

4. ADULATION Excessive

A) pressure B) preoccupation C) priority D) praise

5. STINT Fixed period of

A) leisure B) unemployment C) glamour D) work

6. PLAYWRIGHT

A) safe toy B) drama and/or comedy author C) strict ruler D) facilitator

7. SUE

A) defend in court B) take to court C) plead for in court D) defeat on court

8. STUFFED

A) relaxed B) consulted C) full up D) full house

9. GROUND

A) despicable B) high-minded C) impossible D) basic

10. PRIOR TO

A) before B) simultaneously C) while D) evaluating

11. SHED LIGHT ON

A) deny B) attack C) make clear D) defend

12. PIT

A) windfall B) danger C) promotion D) red letter day

13. DIRE

A) reasonable B) splendid C) mental D) terrible

14. LISTLESSNESS

A) tiredness B) lust for life C) bureaucracy D) fanaticism

15. DEEM

A) consider B) advise C) refuse D) turn down

16. BEG Ask for with great

A) enthusiasm B) anxiety C) aplomb D) arrogance

17. ABANDON

A) gather B) collect C) give up D) recommend

18. ENGAGING

A) stuck-up B) charming C) despicable D) ludicrous

19. GLEEFULLY Showing

A) disgust B) delight C) protest D) despair

20. GARGANTUAN

A) average-sized B) extremely tiny C) extremely large D) unsatisfactory

To compensate for this highly critical kind of TOEFL preparation materials, I would suggest the supply of more enjoyable reading texts derived from popular literature such as detective novels and thrillers, biographies before moving on to the more demanding literary and scientific texts.

VI. Conclusion and Suggestions

In this era of global varieties of English, with the non-native users of English vastly outnumbering its native speakers, TOEFL practice and testing materials should reflect this reality and be as multi-cultural and varied as possible. Broadening the contents from an exclusively American core to an attractive amalgamate of international sources is an absolute must, and will keep students from all over the world interested and motivated. The emphasis in TOEFL preparation courses ought to be laid on the communicative aspects of English, and practice be based on the principles of Communicative Language Teaching, with descriptive instead of prescriptive teaching of grammar.

Devising these material and tests can be a stimulating challenge, and the positive feedback and good results may add to the job satisfaction of generally underpaid academic staff in Indonesia. The role of properly trained native speakers would lie in quality control, providing continuous exposure, knowledge of cultural background to

language issues (what does the headline “Obama Regarded as Bush on Steroids” mean?) and judging by the new generation of Indonesian academics keen on publishing their research papers and theses in English, an increasing demand for professional editors and translators is expected, and the unavoidable need to train Indonesian students to meet this demand. Developing alternative materials and tests to the existing monopolistic ETS TOEFL tests is legally acceptable, as long as the resulting certificates explicitly state that they are Local Equivalents to TOEFL and have no link with ETS whatsoever.

The federal request to make public testing points and test evaluation means that we are also allowed to inform the students of the patterns underlying the TOEFL test, in the way that professional chefs will show interested gourmets around in their kitchen to display the ingredients of a particularly tasty recipe. If we take “innovative” to mean “newly invented or introduced; different from, and especially better or cleverer than previous ones” and “creative” to refer to being “imaginative and inventive” (Oxford ALD), then surely the much-criticised contents of the old ETS TOEFL can be improved.

If English is to be a truly global language, varieties like hybrid languages as observed in recent European and Asian forms of ELF, may in the long run even affect or help simplify the core language of the so-called Inner Circle of native users of English, who may even argue among themselves about the correct vocabulary to be used, as the following dialogue shows:

American tourist in London: “Waiter, can you show me the way to the elevator, please?”

Waiter: “Ah, perhaps you are referring to the lift, sir?”

Tourist: “No, I’d rather call it the elevator – after all, we invented the darned thing!”

Waiter: “That may be true, sir; but surely we invented the English language!”

I shall leave you with an entertaining daydream: what would have happened if President Obama had stayed long enough in Indonesia to acquire an Indonesian accent? Then this hybrid form might catch on in the USA as a trendy way of speaking, and we would not need to study all these long hours, and ace our Listening Comprehension tests.

I would like to thank Professor Dr. Agus Wardhono and the members of ESA UNIROW for their kind invitation that gently pushed me to reflect on these toefl-related issues that have been on my mind since the year 2000, and wish all teacher trainers, lecturers and students of English all the best, hoping that they will enjoy their job as much as I have over the past twenty-five years. Please feel free to ask questions or make comments, and express criticism in constructive ways. Thank you – Terima kasih – Matur nuwun! P.S. And to anticipate the question “What happened to the suitcase you lost?”, I am glad to answer that it was retrieved and forwarded to Yogya after six weeks,