Journal of English Language and literature
Volume 5, Issue 1,March 2020
p-ISSN 2540-8216, e-ISSN 2654-3745
https://journal.stibaiec-jakarta/ojs/index.php/jell

ALIGNING THE TOEFL PREDICTION SCORES TO THE COMMON EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE FOR LANGUAGES (CEFR) LEVEL

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Supeni, S and Fauziah, A. (2020). Aligning the TOEFL prediction scores to the common European framework of reference for languages (CEFR) level. *Journal of English Language and literature*, 5(1), 33-42. DOI 10.37110/jell.v5i01.93

Received: 09-01-2020 Accepted: 01-02-2020 Published:01-03-2020

Abstract: TOEFL as a kind of English test is used to measure students' language proficiency. Binawan University applies TOEFL Prediction test to predict students' English competence. The TOEFL score then is aligned and mapped to CEFR to indicate the level of language ability and qualification. This study was conducted to analyze TOEFL score of Binawan students at CEFR level. The sample was 169 students from several study programs at Binawan University. The research instrument used a package of PBT TOEFL test. Descriptive statistics was used as data analysis technique, mean and percentage. The calculation shows that the mean of the TOEFL prediction score reached by all participants is 413 and the median is 397. Based on CEFR, the students' competence in English is in level A2 (Basic User). Individually, the number of students who is in level A1 (Basic User) is 78 or 46.2 %, level A2 (Basic User) is 35 or 20.7 %, level B1 (Independent User) is 43 or 25.4 %, level B2 (independent User) is 12 or 7.1 %, and the last is level C1 which is occupied by 1 student only that is in level C1 (0.6 %). To conclude almost 50 % of the students were at low level or A2 (Basic User) at CEFR.

Keywords: *TOEFL; CEFR; Proficiency*

INTRODUCTION

In the process of globalization, English has been confirmed into the lingua franca, a tool of international communication, which has had a direct impact on language policy in non-English countries. Being a tool of international communication is the biggest challenge for people of non-English countries to participate in the global world. Grabe (1988) adds that the need of mastering English in modern era is not only mastering the language and using it in communication, but it is also needed to access information, technology, and economic development. So, as a developing country, Indonesia will certainly improve mastery of English as the main tool for mastering information, technology, and economic development.

As an International language, English has been widely used in many aspects of life in Indonesia such as entertainment, business, politics, diplomacy, international trade and industry, commerce, science and technology, the media, information technology, popular culture and education, etc. (Crystal, 2003a). In education aspect, it has already become a tool of communication for most of the lecturers and college students, either for two-way communication in the forms of daily conversation, discussion and lecturing or one-way communication in the forms of doing research, making report and publishing articles in International journals.

The people's ability to speak English does not guarantee that they are really good at Academic English since the English competence is not only seen from the speaking ability. Based on the International Standard, there are some kinds of tests to check the English users competence in English, namely TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication), IELTS (International English Language Testing System), TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), etc. The English competence will be tested in various skills. TOEIC, for example, will test the English competence in two skills; Listening and Reading. IELTS, another example, will test the English competence in four skills; Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking. In this test, there are two kinds of tests. Those are for General English and Academic English. Each of them has different purposes. The other example is TOEFL. There are many kinds of TOEFL, among others are TOEFL PBT, TOEFL CBT, TOEFL iBT and TOEFL ITP.

Since many years, TOEFL has been used to measure English competence over the world. Kunnan (2008) states that TOEFL is arguably the most well-known and widely used large-scale language assessment in the world. According to Brown (2001), TOEFL is a standardized test which is used to find out English competence of non-native speaker. In Indonesia, TOEFL is used as one of English test that can measure students' competence. For some universities, they obligate their students to take TOEFL test as a requirement for their graduation. The result will show their English level or competence.

Recently there has been a very common framework used to see the English language competence. It is initially started in Europe, but nowadays it has been used in almost all over the world including Indonesia. It is called CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages). The CEFR is an international standard for describing language ability. It describes language ability on a six-point scale, from A1 for beginners, up to C2 for those who have mastered a language. This makes it easy for anyone involved in language teaching and testing, such as teachers or learners, to see the level of different qualifications. It also means that the educational institutions can easily know their lecturers, academic staffs and students' English qualifications.

Binawan Institute of Health Sciences (now Binawan University) as one of the private high learning institutions in Indonesia also applies this kind of English competence test, especially the TOEFL Paper Based Test to predict the students' English competence. The purpose of doing this is to know the students' English competence level. The level of the English competence can represent the students' quality. And this condition can also improve the institution quality and image. In order to be known worldwide, the scores of the TOEFL prediction that the students get will be aligned and mapped to the CEFR level.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Definition of Language Proficiency

Language is a tool of communication to convey information, ideas, concepts or feeling that comes to the heart, in the sense of the word as a means of conveying something. According to Wibowo (2001), language is a system of sound symbols that are meaningful and articulate (produced by spoken devices) that are arbitrary and conventional, which is used as a communication tool by a group of humans to give birth to feelings and thoughts. In line with this, Kridalaksana (1993) also states that language is a system of arbitrary sound symbol that allows people to work together, interact, and identify. Another expert, William A. Haviland (1993) states that "Language is a system of sounds that when combined according to certain rules pose meanings can be captured by all the people who speak the language". Meanwhile Chomsky (1957) states language is a set (finite or infinite) of sentences, each finite in length and constructed out of a finite set of elements. In the field of linguistics, language is defined as a system of spoken or written symbols that human beings use as a means of communication in the form of sound. There is a language called English, Indonesian, Portuguese, and others.

English is taught and learned as a foreign language in Indonesia. It has been included in school curriculum either as an intra-curricular program or extra-curricular program. Unfortunately, this subject has no longer been included in the school curriculum in elementary school but it is considered as local content (additional) and it continues to high learning. The result of teaching and learning English for some graduates of senior high students in Indonesia is unpleasant. They fail to explore their language competence, especially in English.

Language proficiency is the ability to use a language spontaneously for real-world purposes.

p-ISSN 2540-8216, e-ISSN 2654-3745
https://journal.stibaiec-jakarta/ojs/index.php/jell

Determining language proficiency can be difficult because there are no universal standards of measurement. Carter and Nunan (2001) defines proficiency as the ability to apply the second language for communicative purposes. Language proficiency can be described as the ability to use a language for any objectives. Education.com states that "Language proficiency is a measurement of how well an individual has mastered a language. Proficiency is measured in terms of receptive and expressive language skills, syntax, vocabulary, semantics, and other areas that demonstrate language abilities. There are four domains to language proficiency: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Language proficiency is measured for an individual by each language, such that the individual may be proficient in English and not proficient in another language."

Language competence is a term related to someone's language ability. It is a condition of someone's capability to use his knowledge in language performances. Bachman (1990) reviews most common idea of language proficiency by some authors. "*Language proficiency is used to describe some terms of language testing to indicate a general knowledge, competence or ability in language usage, irrespective of how, where, or under what conditions it has been acquired".*

According to Collins Dictionary, proficiency means "the quality of state of having great facility (in an art, occupation, etc.) or being skilled. Proficiency is measured in terms of receptive and expressive language skills, syntax, vocabulary, semantics, and other areas that demonstrate language abilities.

Thus, English language proficiency is a socially constructed notion of the ability or capacity of individuals to use English language for specific purposes. It is a measurement of how well an individual has mastered English as a language.

Kinds of English Language Proficiency

Language proficiency measures some language skills. High level of language proficiency refers to proficiency of a foreign language. Proficiency in a foreign language depends on the individual's proficiency in a particular foreign language, but not in another language. Richards and Platt (1992) defines language proficiency as an individual's skill in language use for specific purposes, and it can be evaluated through the application of a proficiency test.

There are four domains to language proficiency. The four skills of language are set of four capabilities that allow an individual to comprehend and produce spoken language for proper and effective interpersonal communication. The four basic skills are related to each other by two parameters: the mode of communication: oral or written and the direction of communication: receiving or producing the message. These skills or language proficiencies are: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Richards, Platt and Platt (1992) adds that proficiency refers to the degree of skill with which person can use a language such as how well a person can read, write, speak or understand language.

Listening comprehension is the receptive skill in the oral mode. This ability associated with understanding speech in the language. According to Brown (2001) listening is the major component in language learning and teaching because in the classroom learners do more listening than speaking. It is also defined by Oxford (1993) that listening is a complex problem solving skill and it is more than just perception of the sounds. Listening includes comprehension of fundamental language skills. It is a medium for all people to gain a large portion of their information, their understanding of the world and of human affairs, their ideals, values and appreciation. As mentioned in Nunan (2003) listening is an active, purposeful process of making sense of what we hear. It means that listening is an active skill which needs process to interpret and understand what people say.

Speaking is the ability to produce speech in the language and be understood by its speakers. Speaking is often connected with listening. Temple and Gillet (1984) emphasizes the close relationship between listening and speaking. They state that it is impossible to separate listening and speaking. When children develop their communicative powers, they also develop the ability to listen appreciatively and receptively. Also Harmer (2007) states speaking is the ability to speak fluently and presupposes not only knowledge of language features, but also the ability to process information and language 'on the spot'. Accordingly, it can be said that speaking is the productive skill that is linked with listening ability. Before produce the language, someone comprehends the information they get from

listening activity, then the responses may appear in speaking activity.

Reading is the receptive skill in the written mode. Reading is the ability to read and understand texts written in the language. According to Alyousef (2005) reading is an interactive process between a reader and a text which leads to automaticity or reading fluency. Grabe (2009) adds reading is a process when readers learn something from what they read and involve it in an academic context as a part of education. Furthermore, the teacher asks the students to read the texts in order to grab information so that they could understand the materials. This activity also gives some advantages for the readers. Hence, reading can be defined as a building- up meaning activity which develops reader's background knowledge in order to get information from the written text.

Writing is the productive skill in the written mode. Writing is the ability to formula oral language into written texts. Writing skill is an important part of communication. In writing, a person will transfer and communicate the ideas, thoughts, and messages to larger and wider audiences with clarity and ease. This competency also measures someone's ability for some others language skills, as vocabulary, grammar, spelling, etc. Harmer (2004) states that writing is a way to produce language and express ideas, feelings, and opinions. Thus, writing is a process to give information which involves social and linguistic competences.

To measure English proficiency, there are three kinds of language proficiency test in English, namely: TOEFL, IELTS and TOEIC.

TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language)

The test of English as a Foreign Language, or TOEFL for short, is a large-scale language assessment. It is widely used to measure the English-language proficiency of foreign students. The results are based on a score and each score links to a particular language level. Kunnan (2008) notes that, *"Over the years, the TOEFL became mandatory for non- American and non-Canadian native speakers of English applicants to undergraduate and graduate programs in U.S and Canadian English-medium universities".*

There are three types of TOEFL; Paper Based TOEFL (PBT). This is the first type of test set, and uses paper. There are three sections: *Listening, Structure and Reading* with score range is 230-677. Computer Based TOEFL (CBT) is the second set. It is done on a computer with a CD and designed to replace PBT TOEFL. It is an advance of PBT TOEFL, with an additional section, *Writing*. The range score is 0-300. The latest is Internet Based TOEFL (iBT). It is the third and more innovative and modern. The iBT consists of an online survey, conducted, as above, using a computer. The materials are: *Reading, Listening, Speaking and Writing* with the range score is 0-120.

In some Asia regions, particularly Indonesia, most institutions still allow the PBT (ITP-TOEFL) as a standard of TOEFL Test.

Description of Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

The Common European of Reference (CEFR) is a set of document which is designed as a guidance for language education including assessment. CEFR is widely used in setting language proficiency requirements. According to University of Cambridge (2011), The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR) is based on the centrality of language activity in its model and a language activity is defined as " the observable performance on a speaking, writing, reading or listening task (a real-world task, or a classroom task).

The Common European of Reference for Languages (CEFR) was developed by the Council of Europe to establish international standards for Language Learning, Teaching and Assessment in all modern European languages. It accommodates language teaching and learning activities, such as the syllabuses, curriculum, tests, and textbooks across the Europe. It also directs how the language learners have to learn and use language for communication as well as develop their language and skills effectively. The CEFR description also covers the cultural context in which language is set. (Council of Europe, 2013). It can be said that the purpose of CEFR is to provide either theoretical or practical basis for developing foreign language teaching curricula, materials and methods of assessment.

Little (2006) mentions that the CEFR suggests four main domains of language use: personal, public, educational and occupational. It also suggests communicative language competence including sociolinguistics and

pragmatic components. Sociolinguistic competences allow people to deal with the social and cultural dimensions of communicative behavior. And communicative acts bring about the performance of tasks, which make people use strategies in order to understand and or produce spoken or written texts.

The CEFR framework explains foreign language proficiency into six levels, namely A1 and A2, B1 and B2, C1 and C2. These six levels are set into three bands: A1 and A2 (basic user); B1 and B2 (independent user); C1 and C2 (proficient user). It also differentiates five communication skills, such as listening, reading, spoken interaction, spoken production, and writing. Related to language proficiency, CEFR measures the five skills on a scale beginning with A1, and progressing through A2, B1, B2 and C1 to C2. At each level, proficiency in each skill is stated by a series of "can do" statements.

Globally CEFR is currently used as a standard indicator to identify language level of students. When students get the TOEFL score which shows their English achievement, it is automatically can be interpreted at the range level of CEFR.

Previous Researches

In previous research the discussion about TOEFL score has been discussed by some of the studies. Sucahyo , Sari Agung in her article "Peta Nilai TOEFL Mahasiswa Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Institut Agama Islam Negeri Samarinda states that the score of TOEFL test for fifth semester of English Department of State Islamic Institute of Samarinda was still at the basic proficiency category (elementary). From all parts of the TOEFL test, none of students got average score more than 50%.

The second study entitles Analisis Perbandingan Nilai TOEFL dengan Nilai Mata Kuliah Bahasa Inggris Mahasiswa. Nurhayati, Iis Kurnia in her article concludes that there was a significant difference between the three scores among the students at Telkom Economics and Business School, Telkom University. This research was conducted to compare student's scores in TOEFL, General English subject and English for Business subject.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

The research design for this study was descriptive. Quantitative approach was used to analyze the data which are TOEFL prediction scores of Binawan students. According to Ary (2002) descriptive statistics is used to manage, sum up, and describe the research. Descriptive statistics in this study aims to describe the alignment of students' TOEFL prediction score to CEFR. The research was conducted by doing document analysis. The documents were collected to be analyzed. For aligning the TOEFL prediction score into the CEFR, the researchers did some mapping in order to find out the level of students' English competence either they have the level of A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 or C2.

Respondents in this research are the students of Binawan Institute of Health Sciences academic year 2017-2018 who joined TOEFL prediction test. There were 169 students

The instrument of this research was TOEFL PBT test. There were 140 questions, consisted of 50 questions of Listening comprehension, 40 questions of Structure and Written and 50 questions of Reading comprehension. Allocation time for TOEFL test was 115 minutes.

After the test, the score of TOEFL prediction test, used as data, is then analyzed and aligned to the CEFR level.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

1. From the 169 participants taken as data sources, the TOEFL scores will be analyzed based on the three skills namely: Listening, Structure and Written Expression, and Reading.

a. Listening

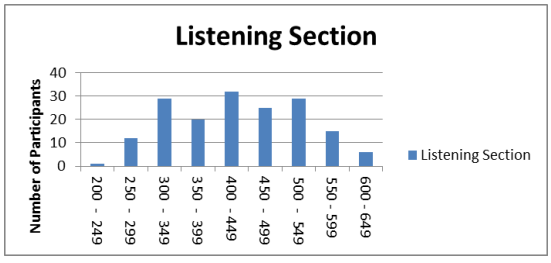

Table 1. The number of participants who gets the listening scores based on the range of score given.

b. Structure and Written Expression

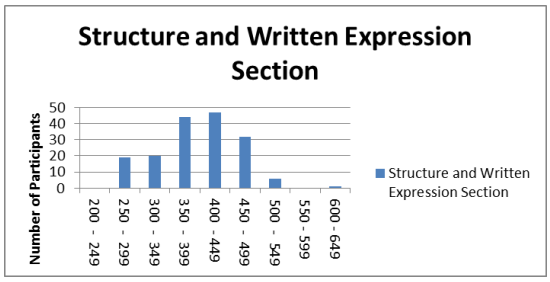

Table 2. The number of participants who get the structure and written expression scores based on the range of score given.

c. Reading

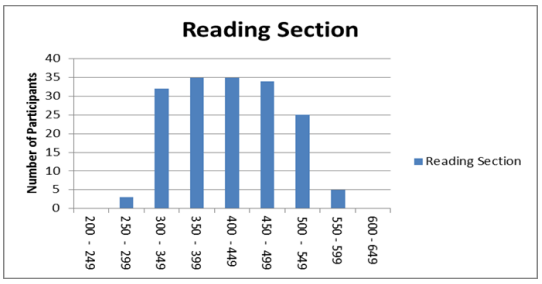

Table 3. The number of participants who get the reading scores based on the range of score given.

2. The total score will be analyzed and then aligned to CEFR level.

The TOEFL Total Score

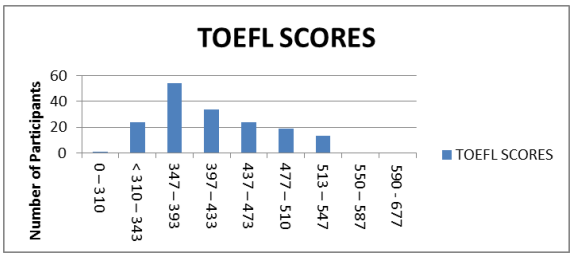

Table 4. The number of participants who get the TOEFL prediction scores based on the range of score given

Discussion

The first English language section tested is Listening comprehension. The purpose of this test is to demonstrate the examinees' or participants' ability to understand spoken English. They must listen to various types of passages on a recording and respond to multiple-choice questions about the passages. In this part of the test, there are 50 (fifty) questions that are tested and divided into three kinds of passages or skill practices such as: (1) short dialogue consisting of thirty short conversations, each followed by a question. The participants will get 30 questions in this part and have to choose the best answer to each question from the four choices in the test book; (2) conversation consisting of two longer conversations, each followed by a number of questions, as many as 4 questions. The participants have to choose the best answer to each question from the four choices in the test book; and (3) talks consisting of three talks, each followed by a number of questions as many as 4 questions. The participants have to choose the best answer to each question from the four choices in the test book.

The second English language section tested is Structure and Written Expression. The purpose of this test is to demonstrate the examinees' or participants ability to recognize grammatically correct English. They must either choose the correct way to complete sentences or find errors in sentences. This section of the test consists of forty questions and it must be completed in twenty-five minutes. It has two types of questions namely: (1) structure consisted of fifteen sentences in which part of the sentence has been replaced with a blank. Each sentence is followed by four answer choices and the examinee has to choose the answer that completes the sentence in a grammatically correct way. (2) written expression consisted of twenty-five sentences in which four words or groups of words have been underlined. The examinee has to choose the underlined word or group of words that is not correct.

And the last English language section tested is reading comprehension. The purpose of this test is to demonstrate the examinees' or participants' ability to understand written English. They must answer multiple-choice questions about the ideas and the meanings of words in reading passages. This section of the test consists of fifty questions which must be completed in fifty-five minutes. In this part of the test the examinees will be given reading passages and they will be asked two types of questions about the reading passages. The first type of the test is reading comprehension questions in which the examinees have to answer questions about the information given in the reading passages. There are a variety of questions about each reading passage such as main idea questions, directly answered detail questions, and implied detail questions. The second type of the

p-ISSN 2540-8216, e-ISSN 2654-3745
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test is vocabulary questions in which the examinees have to identify the meanings of vocabulary words in the reading passages. To answer these kind of questions, the examinees have to know the meanings of the words or they can also identify the meanings of some of the words by understanding the context surrounding the words.

The data found is then analyzed in each section and obtained that as many as 32 participants reach the range of listening comprehension score of 400 – 449 with 18.9 %. The number of participants who reaches the range of score of 300 – 349 is the same as the number of participants who reach the range of score 500 – 549, 29 each with 17.2 %. The next is that 25 participants reach the range of score of 450 – 499 with 14.8 %. The participants who get the range of score of 350 – 399 and 550 – 599 are 20 and 15 (11.8 % and 8.8 % respectively).The highest range of 600 – 649 is achieved by only 6 participants with 3.6 % but the two lowest ranges of score namely the 250 – 299 and 200 – 249 are about 12 and 1 participant (7.1 % and 0.6 %)

To see the participants' real achievement in the listening comprehension, the data must be analyzed one by one without using the range of score. Mean must be done by counting all the score divided by the total number of participants. The calculation shows that the mean of listening comprehension reached by all participants is 432 and the median is 420.

Based on the data of listening analyzed above, it is known that the students' listening competence is above the middle position. The lowest score is 240 and the highest score is 630.

Furthermore, 47 participants reach the range of structure and written expression score of 400 – 449 with 27.8 % and this is the highest number of participants. The second highest is 44 participants (26 %) who are in the range of score of 350 – 399. The next is 32 participants who reach the range of score of 450 – 499 with 18.9 %. Moreover the participants who reach the range of score of 300 – 349 and 250 – 299 are 20 and 19 (with 11.8 % and 11.2 % respectively) ; And there are 6 participants who get the range of score of 500 – 549 with 3.6 %In contrast there is only 1 participant who reaches the range of score of 600 – 649 with 0.6 %. No participants get around 200 - 249 and no one gets the range of score of 550 – 599.

To see the participants' real achievement in the structure and written expression section, the data must be analyzed one by one without using the range of score. Mean must be done by counting all the score divided by the total number of participants. The calculation shows that the mean of the structure and written expression reached by all participants is 392 and the median is 390.

Based on the data of structure and written expression analyzed above, it is known that the students' structure and written expression competence is above the middle position. The lowest score is 260 and the highest score is 600.

Whereas the number of participants reaching the range of reading comprehension score of 350 – 399 and 400 – 449 is the same; 35 with 20.7 % for each of them.; 34 participants reach the range of score of 450 – 499 with 20.1 %; 32 participants reach the range of score of 300 – 349 with 18.9 %; and 25 participants reach the range of score of 500 – 549 with 14.8 %. The two other ranges of score are 550 – 599 with 5 participants (13.2 %) and 250 – 299 with 3 participants (1.8 %). No participants get the range of score of 200 – 249 and 600 – 649.

To see the participants' real achievement in the reading comprehension section, the data must be analyzed one by one without using the range of score. Mean must be done by counting all the score divided by the total number of participants. The calculation shows that the mean of the reading comprehension section reached by all participants is 417 and the median is 410.

Based on the data of reading comprehension analyzed above, it is known that the students' reading comprehension competence is above the middle position. The lowest score is 270 and the highest score is 570.

From the three sections that are tested in TOEFL PBT, it shows that the average prediction score for listening ability is 432, for structure and written expression ability is 392, and for reading ability is 417. It can be said that the ability of structure and written expression is the lowest if it is compared to the two other skills namely listening and reading.

Finally, after the three English competences have been calculated and analyzed, it is shown that the highest percentage is dominated by the range of TOEFL prediction score of 347 – 399 with 31.4 % (53 participants) and the second highest is dominated by the range of TOEFL prediction score of 400 – 449 with 23.7 % (40 participants). The two other ranges of score are 300 – 349 and 450 – 499; that is 28 and 27

participants (with 16.7 % and 16 % respectively). The second lower percentage is for the ranges of score of 500 – 549 with 11.8 % (20 participants) and the lowest percentage is for the ranges of score of 550 – 599 with 0.6 % (1 participant only). No students get the range of score of 200 – 249, 250 – 299 and 600 - 649.

To see the participants' real achievement of the TOEFL prediction score, the data must be analyzed one by one without using the range of score. Mean must be done by counting all the score divided by the total number of participants. The calculation shows that the mean of the TOEFL prediction score reached by all participants is 413 and the median is 397. It means that if it is aligned to the CEFR level, the students' competence in English is in level A2 (Basic User). But if it is seen from the individual, the number of students who is in level A1 (Basic User) is 78 or 46.2 %, level A2 (Basic User) is 35 or 20.7 %, level B1 (Independent User) is 43 or 25.4 %, level B2 (independent User) is 12 or 7.1 %, and the last is level C1 which is occupied by 1 student only that is in level C1 (0.6 %). In other words, almost 50 % of the students joining TOEFL prediction test are still at low level.

CONCLUSION

It is very important to equalize students English competence reflected to the international CEFR. Since it is currently used as a standard indicator of someone's English proficiency globally. The discussion above shows that the students' competence in English is in level Basic User. In general description, the students "only" can communicate in English within a limited range of contexts. It can also be said that the proficiency level is similar to the proficiency level which was found in other institutions in the previous research.

It is far from the university's expectation which is internationally competitive. This unfulfilled target must be influenced by many factors such as: learning motivation, teaching strategies, and curriculum plan.

The CEFR helps to understand a standardized terminology for describing language level. By aligning and mapping TOEFL score into CEFR, the institutions can take some policies to increase students' CEFR level through curriculum development. The CEFR also describes leaners' need to be able to reach the next level. It helps the lecturers seeing what kinds of aspect in learning English should be emphasized. So that, the objective of the study will be achieved.

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