



## Learning Center with Self-Directed Learning: A Foundation for TOEFL Learning Activity



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### Abstract

As a proficiency test, TOEFL requires its learners a special learning strategy to master it. In order to find out an appropriate strategy, learners should understand its characteristics, one of which is autonomous learning. The paper attempts to figure out that learning center (LC) can provide adult learners opportunity to learn TOEFL effectively. LC is a learning site where adult learners are engaged in self-directed learning (SDL) activity. At the site, learners could learn TOEFL effectively and efficiently to achieve a better score. Two groups of students from tourism department and civil engineering department of State Polytechnic of Bali were involved in the research. The research participants were semester V students of the two departments. The former group consisted of twenty-two students and the latter consisted of twenty-six students. TOEFL, a standard testing device applied for measuring students' English competence, has been treating as a challenging device. A lot of students each year had been failing to achieve the passing grade conditioned by the institution prior to their graduation. Ten module sets of TOEFL consisting of ten listening, ten structure & written expression, and ten reading modules have been provided to support LC. The students were informed about the existence of LC and invited to join LC program for a number of meetings. In the future, joiners shall learn TOEFL individually at their preferred opportunity. However, the research participants were guided during the learning at LC as they had not gotten used to the program yet. Of thirty meetings provided, participants had joined fifteen times. The first test (T1) was given prior to their joining LC and last test (L2) was given at the end. During the learning, one staff was in charge to serve participant with the test, answer sheet, and to record their mark in their credit point card. The

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tests' result was then analyzed with a descriptive statistic to see how effective LC was to improve students' TOEFL score. As the result, students were able to improve their TOEFL scores. More obviously, the tourism department students were able to improve their scores more significantly than civil engineering students. In conclusion, self-directed learning with LC model is one of the prospective methods to improve students' TOEFL scores.

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**1. Introduction**

There are a lot of perceptions about self-directed learning (SDL). SDL is a strategy that can contribute to our understanding of learning by identifying an important form of adult learning and providing insight into the process of learning, challenging to define and debate the salient characteristic of adult learners and expanding the thinking about learning in a formal setting (Caffarella, 1993). It is considered as a process, a method, a personality characteristic, and a goal (Maggie-Sue & Duo, 2010). It is also stated to be learning with the aim of implementing information into one's life; academic, professional or personal (Altuger-Genc, 2013). Implementation of self-directed learning (SDL) has been proved to be effective for the adult learner of English in particular (Abdullah, at all., 2008). They claimed that SDL has been becoming an important aspect of adult lifelong learning as they have more control and authority of their own learning and are responsible for their all personal learning. The learning model could successfully promote students' self-confidence, initiative, perseverance and life satisfaction (Widanta, 2016).

There have been a number of researchers curiously undertaken to prove the effectiveness of SDL model. Altuger-Genc (2013) claimed that students, especially professional students, have to do SDL to improve their professionalism in their study at formal school. The model could stimulate them to continuously improve their knowledge and know-how. In his research, two components of learning were applied (instructor-directed learning/ IDL and self-directed learning/ SDL). Both strategies were utilized in the Statistical Quality Control course (MET409). IDL and SDL were designed and implemented mutually in the learning. The finding showed that SDL was triggering students' confidence, comfort and familiarity more than IDL. In line with this, Maggie Su and Duo (2010) measured the readiness of young adult learner of English as a foreign language (EFL), what learning strategy they mostly use to learn EFL, the relation between young adult EFL learners' SDL readiness and their learning strategy, and to see the most effective learning strategy category. 110 EFL major college students were invited to fill in the questionnaire. Descriptive statistic was used to analyze data. The result showed that students of EFL of the college had reached a medium to high level of SDL readiness, suggesting that they have been able to motivate and monitor their own learning process. They were found able to use the SDL strategy to acquire their target language.

The strategy was also utilized with the use of computer assistance. O'Donell (2006) reviewed the use of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) for learning English as a Second Language class in Korea. In addition, it was undertaken to recognize the current use of CALL to Korean EFL context through literature available and personal experience in an attempt to determine if CALL should be used in Korean. O'Donell (2006)'s investigation successfully found that applying CALL gave opportunity and also difficult due to the socio-cultural and educational environment. However, some innovative uses of CALL-related to EFL/ESL context could be applied potentially in Korea. Kanna and MacKnish (2000) furthermore suggested an online learning to be next alternative. They claimed that in order for a student to practice their skill and to expose themselves to the computer and provide themselves with peer and alternative learning environment, they have to engage in online learning. The learning strategy could reduce students' anxiety, especially when it is offered in

the multimedia lab to aid students' visualization (Huang & Liu, 2000). This situation is triggering that learning TOEFL in LC shall also be innovatively renovated that students can learn it with CALL.

According to Gureckis and Markan (2012), SDL is very meaningful to implement as learners' experience is under their control. The model is beneficial to learners as it is a "flash card" study which enables learners to choose the timing and order of each studied item. In addition, it is also an active category learning, intervention-based learning, as well as active gathering of informal learning. In line with this, Loyens, Magda, and Rikers (2008) support the idea that SDL is necessary for learners as they can do a problem-based learning with it. SDL can give students a broader role in selecting, and evaluate materials. Ping Chuk (2004) agrees on that idea that autonomous learning (SDL) is an effective way of learning as it can develop students meta-cognitive awareness, learner awareness, subject matter awareness, as well as social awareness. SDL is closely related to self-regulated learning (SRL). These both can support and improve students' e-learning activity. SDL and SRL are developmental processes which promote the "self" aspect, and in its implementation can encompass SRL (Loyens, Magda and Rikers (2008), however, SDL is a concept of adult education and SRL focuses on educational physiology and cognitive psychology which is mostly studied in school environment (Saks and Laijen (2014). Basically, SDL is considered a broader construct encompassing SRL.

There have been a number of ideas and concept reviewed above. Most ideas proposed agreed that SDL is very useful and beneficial for adult learners. It triggers learners to experience things under their control (Guneckis & Markant, 2012). SDL is definitely required as it can develop students' awareness, such as metacognitive, social, subject matter awareness (Ping Chuk, 2004). Other idea stated that SDL shall be combined with problem-based learning (PBL) to make it successful and meaningful (Loyens, Magda, and Rikers, 2008). The more advanced ideas suggested that SDL shall be implemented with computer technology. Thus, it can be applied in CALL (O'Donell, 2006; Huang & Liu, 2000), and it is very applicable to online learning (Kanna & MacKnish, 2000). Most of those ideas are still normative and two of them can be motivating for future development. However, all of them have not given any specific input on how to implement the concepts, where they can be implemented, what type of English lesson are suitable for the concepts and so forth. None of them suggest implementing the SDL concept to learn any standardized test, including TOEFL, TOEIC, or IELTS. This is the reason why the researchers would like to try to develop TOEFL test booklet for practice. Thus, more specifically, the researchers wanted to develop learning center (LC) program for learning students of BSP to learn TOEFL.

## 2. Research Methods

As it was a developmental research, an object included in the research was the result of the development, i.e. TOEFL learning modules. In addition, the result of tests was also set as the research object. Two test results (T1 and T2) were analyzed to recognize model effectiveness. There were thirty modules produced to support the learning at LC. The modules were divided into three parts, Listening, Structure & Written Expression, and Reading. Each part has ten modules.

The subject of the research were two groups of a student at State Polytechnic of Bali. One group of twenty-two students is from Tour and Travel study program, Tourism Department and one group of twenty-six students is from Construction Project study program, Civil Engineering Department.

Prior to the learning at LC, the research participants were informed about the existence of LC. There were also invited to be research participants and joined the LC program. The groups of student were chosen randomly. They were also informed about the function of LC, what they can do at LC, how to join LC. Learning at LC was then started up on the information sharing. The research participants were invited regularly. Each member of the group had joined LC program 15 times. This happened because of the situation that students still have classes during the period. As they are busy dealing with their regular class, some LC programs were conducted in their classroom. This was energized because they are about to have a final examination.

The pre-test was given prior to the learning execution. The test was undertaken by the researcher. One series of TOEFL book was used as a testing tool (T1 and T2) to measure participants' progress. The test result was used as a baseline to see how their skill of language would improve. Post-test was given at the end of the session. Both results of the test were analyzed with a descriptive statistic.

## 3. Results and Analysis

Analysis of test result was enhanced to see how the LC was. A number of aspects could show the result, such as minimum score, maximum score, the standard of deviation, mean, median, modus, variant, an average of increase, the percentage of the mean. The following table shows achievement of both groups.

No	Subject	TES 1	TES 2
1	S01	447	500
2	S02	457	503
3	S03	450	497
4	S04	453	510
5	S05	443	493
6	S06	466	517
7	S07	453	510
8	S08	433	457
9	S09	443	457
10	S10	427	457
11	S11	427	457
12	S12	417	437
13	S13	420	440
14	S14	423	447
15	S15	427	447
16	S16	433	477
17	S17	437	457
18	S18	443	480
19	S19	450	490
20	S20	443	453
21	S21	420	460
22	S22	423	450
23	S23	427	443
24	S24	417	440
25	S25	420	460
26	S26	423	457

Figure 1. Control Group

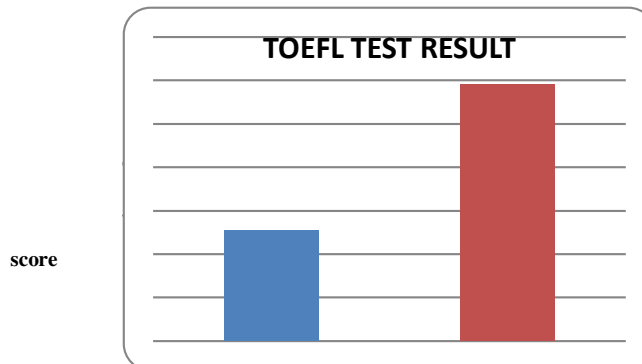


Figure 2. Bar Diagram

Minimum	417.00	437.00
Maximum	466.00	517.00
Mean	435.46	469.08
Median	433.00	457.00
Modus	443.00	457.00
Stdev	14.09	25.11
varians	198.42	630.47
Means of Progress	-	33.62
% Progress	-	7.72

No	Subject	Test 1	Test 2
1	P01	500	543
2	P02	510	517
3	P03	447	497
4	P04	490	503
5	P05	490	510
6	P06	490	517
7	P07	457	483
8	P08	470	487
9	P09	483	493
10	P10	460	483
11	P11	470	497
12	P12	457	480
13	P13	460	477
14	P14	487	503
15	P15	473	497
16	P16	450	477
17	P17	453	480
18	P18	487	500
19	P19	473	493
20	P20	470	490
21	P21	467	487
22	P22	483	497

Figure 3.  
Experiment  
Group

	Test 1	Test 2
Sipil	435.46	469.08
Par	473.95	495.95

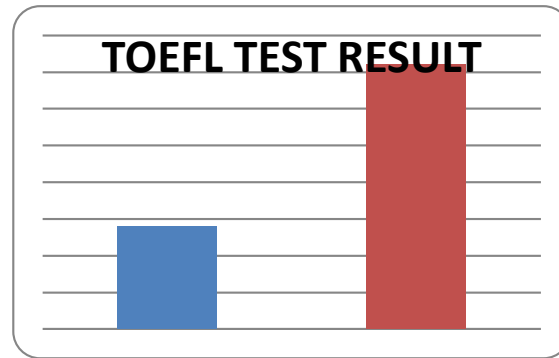


Figure 4. Bar Diagram

Minim	447.00	477.00
Maxim	510.00	543.00
Average	473.95	495.95
Median	471.50	495.00
Modus	490.00	497.00
Stdev	16.98	15.73
Variants	288.33	247.28
Average progress	-	22.00
% increase	-	4.64

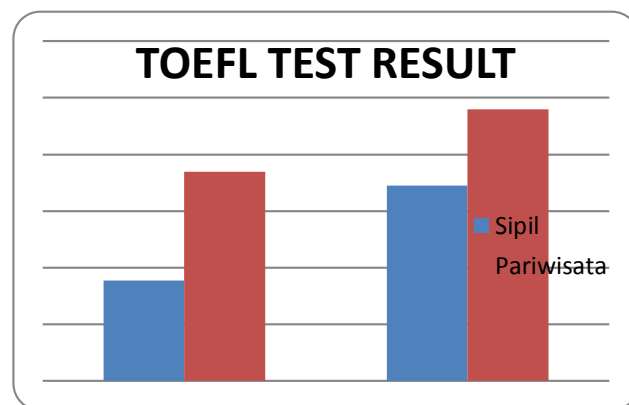


Figure 5. Diagram of Comparison of two group

The analysis on T1 and T2 of the two groups was indicated by two indicators, the first result of the analysis was displayed separately to clearly show the progress of each group. Second, a combination of groups' progress was displayed in one diagram to show a comparison of both groups.

It can be clearly seen that group of Tourism Department achieved a higher score than that of Civil Engineering. The mean of T1 and T2 scores of Civil Engineering Dept. student were 435.46 and 469.08 respectively. The mean of progress from T1 to T2 was 33.62. The progress percentage was 7,72%. The group minimum score of T1 and T2 was 417.00 and 437.00 respectively. And their maximum score of T1 and T2 was 466.00 and 517.00 respectively.

The different scene can be seen from the group of Tourism. This group achieved higher score only in some aspect of T1 and T2. Their means of T1 and T2 results was 473,95 and 495,95 respectively. Their mean of

progress from T1 to T2 was 22,00. Progress percentage was 4,64. The group minimum score of T1 and T2 was 447,00 and 477,00 respectively. And their maximum score of T1 and T2 was 510,00 and 543,00 respectively. To sum up, the group of Civil Engineering department has a lower baseline the group of Tourism department. However, the technology group achieved better progress which is indicated by mean of progress achieved by each group.

The result of analysis above obviously displayed that overall students of Tourism Department have higher English competence than Civil Engineering group. It can be seen with a score of their T1 and T2. The condition results. In addition, their English learning hour has been more intensive than Civil Engineering students. However, their achievement during learning TOEFL at LC was considered a less sufficient being compared to the achievement of Civil Engineering students.

The Engineering group, even though, have lower English ability showed by their T1 result, could reveal higher mean of progress (33,65) while Tourism group achieved lower mean (22,00). It can be concluded that Engineering group got better success in doing SDL strategy at LC. This could result. This might be a good case to investigate for a further research topic. Civil Engineering students' daily learning strategy can be investigated to find out what makes them successful in learning English test. In addition, condition happened to students of Tourism department is also a challenging opportunity to research. This can be an interesting case to study in order to find out exact reasons why they performed such kind of performance. Both cases can be of importance to investigate so that some new learning strategies can be developed.

#### 4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the results of the research could obviously reveal that SDL strategy implemented in LC program is successful and meaningful. The situation is shown by each research participant's progressing achievement. This program can hopefully be attracting students' willingness, perseverance and motivation to do self-directed learning not only at LC but also in their every single moment to help improve their professionalism.

Thus, we suggest that every academic and staff of the institution shall trigger students to make use the program of LC frequently to help improve their English competence. Further development in learning strategy should certainly be undertaken frequently so that English learning process at State Polytechnic of Bali can continuously be improved.

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