

It's back to happenings time with MELTA. We hosted a TOEFL seminar, a half-day one, at the British Council on the 24th of August 1985. There were five main issues presented and discussed. The following list of the main issues tabled will give you a brief account of the activities which took place on that day:

1. The TOEFL test: what it consists of.
2. How to prepare students for the TOEFL test: study programmes, methods and materials.
3. Relevant materials and time to browse through some of these materials.
4. Studying on an American campus — a talk by Dr Marti Thomson, Director of MACEE.
5. What TOEFL doesn't test: additional preparation which Malaysian students need.

The seminar was first conducted by Mr Jim Kerr who informed the group of participants, who numbered approximately 55, that the Education Ministry's programme to train students for the TOEFL examination, a requirement for entrance to U.S. universities, comprised 850 students, involved about 80 teachers and was conducted in 10 locations in Malaysia. The programme, therefore, is massive and the chances are that we may be increasing the numbers being serviced for U.S. universities. Granted that it is big and it is popular, what is the nature of this test?

The TOEFL test is prepared and graded in the U.S. by the Educational Testing Service, Princeton, Jersey. It is a test aimed at measuring the proficiency level of a non-native speaker of English. The intention here seems to be to forecast the language level of a student who aspires to further his studies in one of the U.S. universities. Thus, all non-native speakers of English need to take this test and the scores on this test are acceptable for entrance into U.S., Australian and most Canadian universities.

Entrance into U.S. universities will depend on the U.S. university in question since each university has its own score requirements depending on the course or programme the student intends to pursue. However, the following test score figures will give you some idea of what to expect:

- (a) Below 400 you will have to take the test again.
- (b) The safe or desirable safe score is 550.
- (c) Elite universities have a score requirement of about 650 and above.

Thus, the range is varied and is particular to the institution and its philosophies.

What then are the requirements necessary for taking the TOEFL test? Here we shall also take a cursory look at the components of this test.

In order to take this test one has to apply through MACEE and pay a fee of \$63/-. A lead pencil and an eraser are the basic tools that one has to take along to the test.

The whole test is divided into three parts: (a) listening, (b) comprehension, grammar and reading, (c) vocabulary. All test items are basically multiple-choice in nature and the tapes are played only once in a test situation. Thus, the learner has to have some measure of basic English language competence in order to perform in this test.

Both seminar conductors stressed the need to train students for life in the U.S. The following areas of training were stressed:

- (a) Study Skills
- (b) Social English
- (c) How to type and computer literacy.

Dr Thomson from MACEE gave a brief account of the associate degrees now available in Malaysia where a U.S. bound student can do his first two years of a degree programme in Malaysia and the remaining two years in the U.S. university awarding the degree. The participants were also informed that most U.S. universities administer an English language placement test once a foreign student enters the U.S. university. Further information on study in the U.S. can be obtained from MACEE.

The seminar was useful, especially to those who had very little idea of what the TOEFL test is all about. The materials enclosed in the seminar files too provided useful information pertaining to the TOEFL test. The seminar came to a close at about half-past twelve. Many participants during and after the seminar spent time exchanging ideas, enquiring and getting to know each other better. It was a good day. A lot of people were gathered. A lot was exchanged and many left the seminar with a better idea of TOEFL and what it comprises.



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