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CAN LEARNINGAPPS.ORG ENHANCE STUDENTS' TOEFL STRUCTURE SCORES?: FOCUSING ON SELF ASSESSMENT

by

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Abstract:

TOEFL (Test of English as Foreign Language) is still taking place as a demanding English proficiency test in many countries, especially in Indonesia. This initial test is extensively used for various purposes, such as scholarship admission or job application. Among the three sections in the TOEFL test, the structure has been challenging for the test takers regarding examining the grammatical rules. Due to the need for study numbers on TOEFL structure score betterment by employing the learning media, this study aims to outline the improvement of TOEFL score, particularly in structure and written expression, after using learningapps.org as self-evaluation. The 26 high school students participated in this study. The data were gathered through documentation and test-in structure pretest and post-test scores. Data were statistically analyzed by compare means, using paired sample test. The result of the study reveals that learningapps.org did not positively affect students' enhancement of structure and written expression on the TOEFL test. The study implies that more precise learningapps must be chosen and tried to know the correlation.

Keywords: Structure TOEFL; Learningapp.org; Self-assessment

Abstrak:

TOEFL (Test of English as Foreign Language) masih berlangsung sebagai tes kecakapan bahasa Inggris yang menuntut di banyak negara, terutama di Indonesia. Tes awal ini banyak digunakan untuk berbagai keperluan, seperti penerimaan beasiswa atau lamaran pekerjaan. Di antara tiga bagian dalam tes TOEFL, strukturnya telah menantang bagi peserta tes mengenai memeriksa aturan tata bahasa. Karena kebutuhan angka studi pada perbaikan skor struktur

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TOEFL dengan menggunakan media pembelajaran. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguraikan peningkatan skor TOEFL, khususnya dalam struktur dan ekspresi tertulis, setelah menggunakan learningapps.org sebagai evaluasi diri. 26 siswa SMA berpartisipasi dalam penelitian ini. Data dikumpulkan melalui dokumentasi dan nilai pretest dan post-test struktur test-in. Data dianalisis secara statistik dengan cara membandingkan, menggunakan uji sampel berpasangan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa learningapps.org tidak secara positif mempengaruhi peningkatan struktur dan ekspresi tertulis siswa pada tes TOEFL. Studi ini menyiratkan bahwa aplikasi pembelajaran yang lebih tepat harus dipilih dan dicoba untuk mengetahui korelasinya.

Kata kunci: Struktur TOEFL; Learningapp.org; Penilaian diri

INTRODUCTION

The employment of learning media in TOEFL has grown in popularity in recent years. It is because more and more people are interested in taking the TOEFL test to improve their English language skills. While the conservative way of taking the TOEFL test is still available, there are many current diverse ways test takers can utilize for the TOEFL test improvement using different types of learning media. In utilizing learning aid, Safriyanti (2021) stated that e-learning management systems such as Google Classroom and google meet contributed positively to assisting the students in pursuing and taking part in online learning of TOEFL. It is affirmed by Simatupang (Simatupang, 2021), who claimed that google classroom increases English comprehension, especially listening, speaking, and grammar. They also stated that employing the learning media is faster and more detailed. This application can display learning materials in diverse forms like text, pictures, or videos.

Another learning media that affected TOEFL's betterment is the use of Moodle, which helped the blended learning between virtual and in-person classes of TOEFL (Amelia & Harmaini, 2020). To help the TOEFL simulation, applying PHP and MySQL programming languages was effective, especially in the TOEFL question distribution for the test-takers. Completing the learning media, there is another e-learning for TOEFL. It is called the liquid web application that could be a virtual learning strategy for the TOEFL test-takers. It provides especially two ways of Flexiquiz web application services that contributed the most to enhancing TOEFL vocabularies, such as grading and reviewing answers (Affini et al., 2018). In the same vein as the studies mentioned earlier, the media, such as Edpuzzle interactive video, can positively contribute to English listening skills (Mawaddah & Mustofa, 2022). However, not all learning media impacted English skills, like computer-assisted reading. A

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study showed no correlation between computer-assisted reading, which used lexical-tutor application on students' reading skills (Zakiyuddin., 2022).

Society and the world are highly interested in taking the TOEFL test to improve their English proficiency for either work or study. The demand for TOEFL has increased significantly in recent years, making it one of the most popular English-language tests (Renandya et al., 2018). This language assessment test measures non-English natives' ability to use and comprehend English in an academic environment. Colleges and universities worldwide recognize TOEFL as a reliable indicator of English language proficiency. Some college students even take a TOEFL as a placement test to measure their English before university entry. However, Hille and Cho (2020) stated that the placement test of us in the institution's TOEFL ITP or local English test did not relate to students' academic performance in classes. Also, many employers use this English test to assess job applicants' language skills. As a result, TOEFL ITP still plays an essential role in several countries (Golubovich et al., 2018), particularly in Indonesia (Situmorang, 2021). The TOEFL skills examined consists of a listening section with 50 questions, a structure and written expression section with 40 questions, and a reading section with 50 questions (Phillips, 2001). These questions are presented in a multiple-choice style, and test takers must finish TOEFL ITP within 110 minutes. TOEFL scores are valid for two years after the test date. Because the demand for TOEFL is constantly changing, it is essential to keep the score valid by retaking the test every two years (Taylor, 2011).

The TOEFL exam challenges those who are not native English speakers, urging many to study hard and ultimately reach their aim of becoming fluent. Among the three sections tested in TOEFL ITP, structure skill becomes the hardest for most students (Ananda, 2016; Putra, 2020). This skill needs intense concentration to understand the grammatical structure of English. This section could be the most challenging for some test-takers who have yet to learn English deeply. It requires an excellent comprehension of grammar and written expression (Tangkelangi, 2020). The structure consists of 40 questions and is divided into two parts. The first is part A, with 15 multiple-choice questions, and the second is error analysis, with 25 questions. Understanding basic and intermediate grammar is required to answer this structure section (Thompson, 2001).

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Regarding the TOEFL, the structure test can be a real challenge. However, learning media are available that can make studying for this part of the exam simpler and less daunting. One such resource is learningapps.org, which offers a variety of activities and games to help review grammar rules through self-assessment.

Most TOEFL learners take a TOEFL course or private class of TOEFL to comprehend the TOEFL excellently and reach the required score (Sudrajat & Astuti, 2018). However, those courses or additional classes that took students to learn TOEFL could be more efficient (Alderson & Hamp-Lyons, 1996). The self-study exercise is highly recommended for learners (Boud, 2013). In order to facilitate this process, numerous programs have been designed with TOEFL preparation in mind; one such example is Learningapps.org, which has become self-learning media to improve language learning. Learningapps.org is one of the interactive resources that can help the students understand and review the material covered on the test. Using visuals and games makes learning the material much easier, and people can tailor the learning according to their own pace. Several practices on the site are available that provide more exposure to testing.

Learningapps.org is a website that provides a variety of educational apps and games to assist students in leveling up their English skills. The website offers various activities, including listening comprehension, reading comprehension, grammar, and vocabulary exercises. The website also offers a research section that allows users to search for specific topics and keywords. This contributes to learning media that assist students in learning with attractive figures and explorations, which can significantly help the students in studying (Susanti et al., 2021). This application is used as a self-assessment for students.

Furthermore, it is an online application that is free to be accessed by both students and teachers. This application allows teachers worldwide to create media, quizzes, games, and other attractive learning content. However, this media can only be used for self-study and cannot be controlled or supervised by a teacher and graded by application instantly. This media aims for self-assessment to assist students in learning English using several interactive figures.

As researched above, the number of learning media former studies offer is diverse. However, using learningapps.org as learning assistance related to TOEFL preparation has yet

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to be unpacked. Therefore, it is considered significant to find out the benefit of learningapps.org in contributing to the TOEFL as a learning media. This study outcome is expected to be a meaningful reference for students and a teaching reference for TOEFL teachers.

Several prior studies have been conducted about TOEFL as language testing or learning media to assist the TOEFL improvement. A study (López-Gopar, 2021) contended that having a qualified TOEFL ITP score (with a minimum of 500-550) has become a requirement for graduates of Bachelor programs, job application, participation in foreign programs, and self-branding for English qualification. Another research by (Cushing Weigle, 2010) revealed that the validation between the automated writing score of TOEFL IBT and the actual writing skill of test-takers were moderate. The involvement of a human assessor and e-rater can contribute equally to the final score of the TOEFL test.

Another study regarding the use of learning media to improve TOEFL scores was shown by Syakur (2019) that the implementation of e-learning positively affirms the improvement of TOEFL scores for higher education level students. While implementing learning media is encouraged, self-assessment in learning English should get more designs from both students and teachers (Falchikov & Boud, 1989). Furthermore, research about the learning media of learningapps.org by (Susanti et al., 2021) showed that students' perspective on learningapps.org is positive. This media helped the students learn by providing automatic feedback, various eye-catching exercises, straightforward language, and the appropriate level of learners.

Since there has yet to be a single study addressing the issue of the learningapps.org media effect on a specific topic of TOEFL, learningapps.org aims to improve the structure and written expression scores as self-assessment through the employment of various activities is proposed. The following article will investigate the improvement of the structure TOEFL score by using the media of learningapps.org as mentioned in the research questions below:

1. What are the available features of learningapps.org that can assist the TOEFL as a learning media for self-assessment?
2. Is there an improvement in TOEFL structure and written expression scores after utilizing learningapps.org as self-evaluation media?

METHOD

Design

The type of research implemented in this study is quantitative. This research uses Compare Means, and it is used to examine the means of a paired sample of the TOEFL structure improvement before and after using learningapps.org. This design has been employed in most research with the same aim to find out the means gap on some variables (Kim, 2014). It was ever conducted by (Kamps et al., 2007) to investigate the impact of evidence-based reading instruction on elementary school students. In this study, the 26 high school students in the TOEFL preparation class participated in the TOEFL structure test and received the test in two cycles backward and after employing learningapps.org. Then, the pretest and post-test scores were obtained to be analyzed in this study.

Participant

The number of research participants is 26 students from the third grade of middle school. The type of school is an Islamic boarding school, which requires the students to stay a full day in the dormitory for the time, and it specifies for male students only. The students participate from the second semester of the third year, and the student's English level is intermediate EFL learners. These participants must obtain the standardized TOEFL score with a minimum score of 450 as the requirement to graduate from this high school.

Instrument

Two research instruments were employed to gain data. Documentation is used to find the features in the learningapps.org site that were beneficial and impacted the students' learning of TOEFL as it outlines the first research question. In contrast, the second instrument was the pretest of TOEFL section two, with 40 complete questions consisting of 15 multiple-choice questions and 25 error analysis questions. It was to perceive the actual score of students before experiencing learningapps.org as learning media. The following instrument was a post-test with the same number of questions but different test questions. It was used to find the TOEFL structure score after applying learningapps.org as a self-assessment. Both pretest and post-test scores were aimed to gain the score means and find the impact of learningapps.org on TOEFL. This test instrument is to state the outcome of the second research question.

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Data collecting technique

We collected the data from the documentation. This study gathered the students' records of their learning activities in their free time at the dormitory, mainly when using learningapps.org. Most documentation was in the form of screenshots using learningapps.org while finishing some quizzes or games in learningapps.org related to the structure or grammar. It was to display what kind of application features they preferably used to complete and assist them in comprehending better grammatical structure.

The following data were compiled from the pretest and post-test scores. The pretest was conducted on the first week of learning TOEFL. After we acquired the pretest score, they were introduced to the application of learningapps.org and given space for about three weeks to explore and employ this learning site. In the last week, the participants were tested again with a different set of TOEFL structure questions, and we took this second score as a post-test. Both pretest and post-test scores were collected manually from students. Both tests primarily focused on section two or the structure test of TOEFL, which is to examine the students' understanding in analyzing the structure and grammatical errors. In addition, most of the grammar performed on the TOEFL test is diverse from essential to intermediate grammar levels, such as simple, compound, and compound-complex sentences. The grammatical error analysis focused on the subject-verb agreement, the countable and uncountable nouns, the use of auxiliaries, the kind of phrases, and the word class. This test score reveals whether the improvement existed in section two of the TOEFL test from the view of the preliminary test and the post-test.

Data analysis technique

The preliminary test and post-test data were analyzed by Compare Means and processed through IBM SPSS 2020 Statistic application using Paired sample T-Test. The data from the pretest and post-test of structure TOEFL were entered individually in the blank sheet of data view in SPSS. After inputting the data, we moved to the variable view. At this stage, we ensured that the data were zero decimal and changed the measure to be scale instead of nominal and ordinal. The analysis procedures start with clicking the Analyze menu, choosing the Compare Means, and selecting paired sample T-test in the next stage, dragging the pretest of the TOEFL structure on the variable one column and the post-test score of the TOEFL structure at the variable two columns. Once we have set the dialog box up correctly, we click

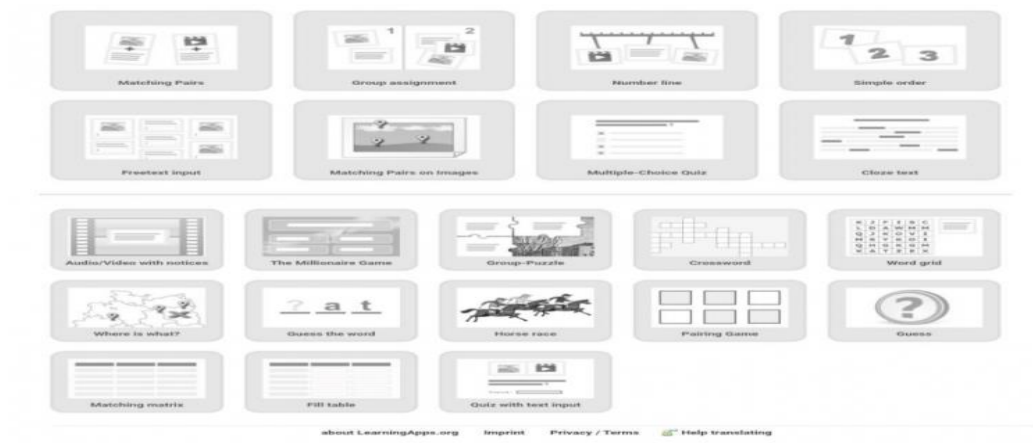
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OK to run the paired simple T-test, and the result is executed on the output, which would be presented on findings with its interpretations.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

This section first showed the features of learningapps.org that contributed significantly to the TOEFL tests learning structure. The learningapps.org was first constructed as a research collaboration project by two higher institutions in Switzerland universities of teacher education. This learning tool was designed closely with around a dozen teachers (Powell, 2021) and has served in more than 23 language diversity. The feature types in learning apps-org were divergent. It provides matching pairs, group assignments, chronological ruler, simple order, text input, sorting pictures, a quiz with the choice of the correct answer, fill the gaps, an application grid, and audio/video content. It also provides "who wants to be a millionaire, puzzle "guess," crossword, letter words, where is it located, guessing words, horse racing, game "couples," and rate. The figure of feature varieties on learningapps.org is shown below.

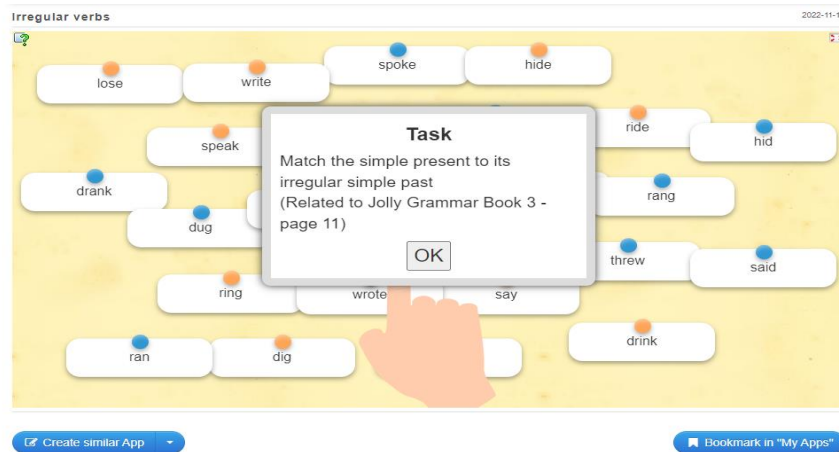


Picture 1. The features in learningapps.org

Several constituents were mainly utilized to explore grammar exercises. The first favorite feature by participants is **matching pairs**, which offers the learners to discover the paired words, texts, images, voice notes, audio, video, or a mixture of those media. There might be a distraction to create more choices to make the game more challenging. This

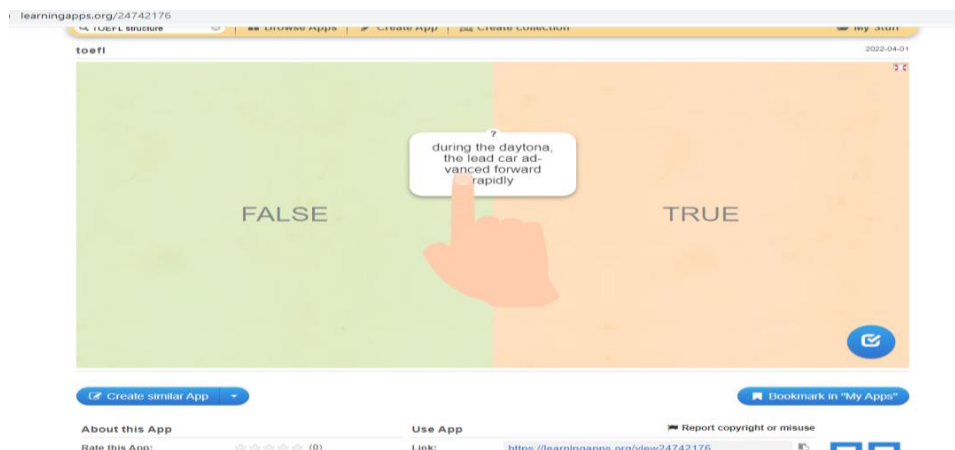
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matching pair feature will be automatically checked and disappear or might stay appeared depends on the exercise creator. Here, the students can match the specific grammatical word with the pair in the form of picture, word, sound, or others, as displayed in the picture below.



Picture 2. Matching pairs

Group assignment is another favorable option for research participants because they can easily group two terms regarding the grammatical rule. This feature is to classify the information in the form of text, picture, text-to-speech, audio, or video. There will be two groups on this feature, and the users should classify which information belong to either the first or the second group. It is the portrayal of the group assignment on learningapps.org as below.

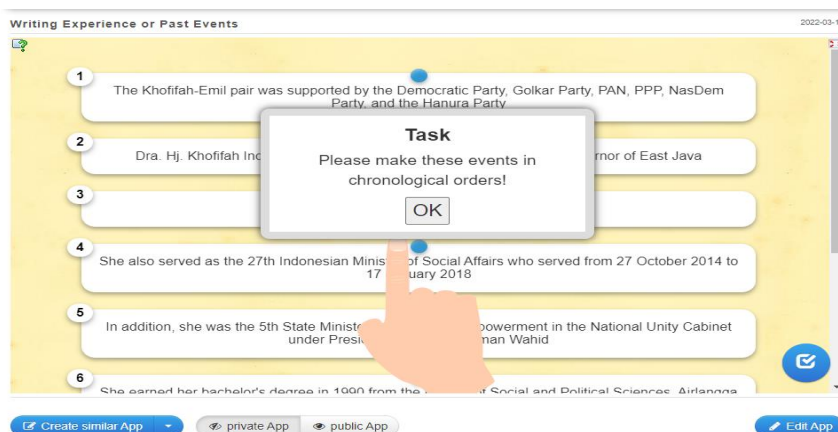


Picture 3. Group assignment

Simple order is the third preferred feature, where the users should put the media in order with a specific direction. It instructs to arrange the media as an image, vocabulary,

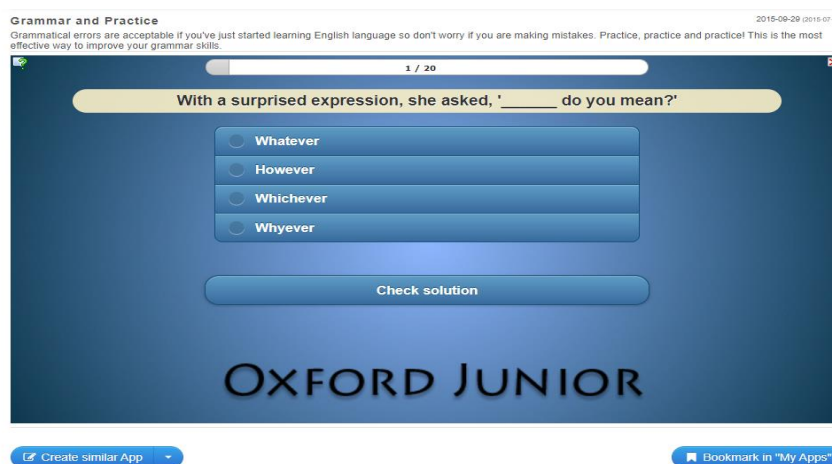
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sentences, numbers, audio, or combination. The research participants adulate this feature since they can put the grammatical words or sentences in the correct order. The grammatical exercise using simple order can be seen below.



Picture 4. Simple order

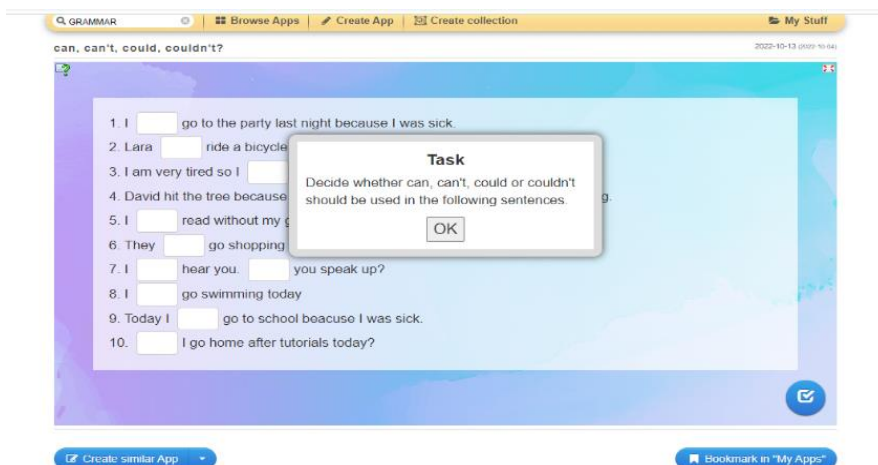
A **multiple-choice quiz** is a standard test used for English. Like other multiple answers questions on English tests, this feature became a cherished quiz on learningapps.org.



Picture 5. Multiple-choice quiz

The participants have already figured out how to play this feature since they could answer each question by selecting one best option. Here is how the multiple-choice question look alike on learningapps.org. Although participants showed many pleased traits, we only displayed the top five features mentioned by participants. The last favored item on learningapps.org that participants cherished is **Cloze-Text**. In grammatical skill, the cloze-text trait provides some sentences with blank words that application players must fulfill. An example of a grammar quiz using a cloze-text item is shown below.

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Picture 6. Cloze text

Furthermore, to reveal the outcome of the second research question, we employed the quantitative method with paired sample T-test. This research has collected two primary data, the first from the result of the TOEFL structure pretest and the score of the TOEFL structure post-test as the second data. The Compare Means result of the two tests can be seen in the table below:

Table 1 Paired samples statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest	41.15	26	4.739	.929
	Posttest	40.38	26	5.492	1.077

The table above shows that the pretest mean is 41.15 while the post-test mean is 40.38. It unpacks that there is a lower improvement in students' scores. With 26 participants, the standard deviation of the pretest score is 4.739, and the post-test score is 5.492. Meanwhile, the standard error mean for each test is 0.929 and 1.077. To ensure whether there is significant structure TOEFL improvement between the pretest and post-test, we used the significant value to examine the effect of using learningapps.org as a study aid on the TOEFL structure test.

Table 2 Paired samples correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Pretest & Post-test	26	.386	.051

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The table above shows that coefficient correlation from both variables is 0.051, meaning the significance value is less than 0.05. Therefore, this value emphasizes the slight improvement of using learningapps.org as a self-assessment in enhancing the participants' TOEFL structure score. Additionally, another table is presented to reveal the significant value.

Table 3 The significance value

	Paired Differences						t	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 Pretest - Post test	.769	5.701	1.118	-1.534	3.072	.688	.498	

The value of 2-tailed significance is 0.498, and that reveals there is little significant impact before and after employing the learningapps.org to enhance the score of the TOEFL structure test. Thus, the hypothesis (Ha) is rejected, and the null hypothesis (Ho) is accepted, which shows the insignificance of learningapps.org toward section two of TOEFL with a significance level of 0.05. In addition, a diagram below summarizes the score difference between the pretest and post-test of students:

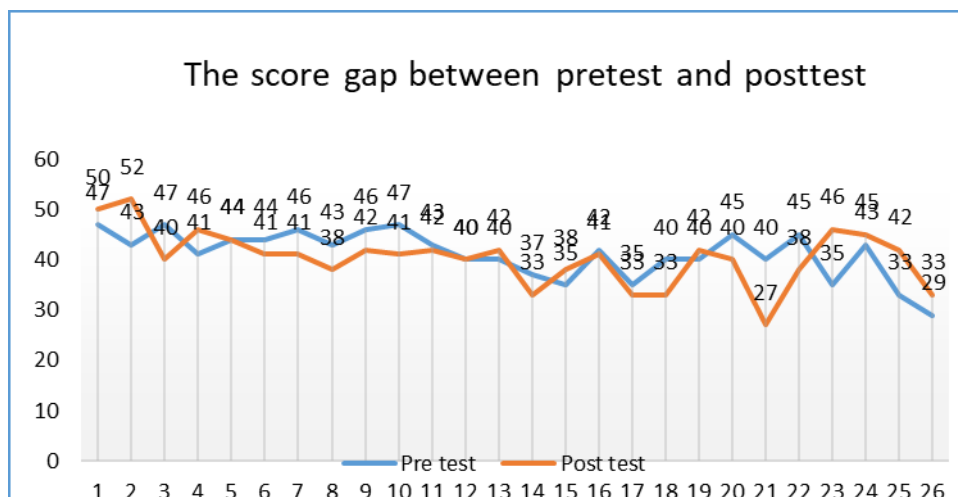


Diagram 1 The score of the pretest and post-test

The graphic diagram above displays the difference in structure tests before and after using learningapps.org. The post-test score in the orange line showed a slight decrease and

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seemed unchanged compared to the blue line, representing the pretest score. Therefore, the implementation of the learningapps.org application contributed insignificantly to the score of the structure test.

Discussion

Statistically, the significant value shown is 0.498, which means it is higher than 0.05. The result proves that learningapps.org as self-assessment does not dramatically affect students' scores on the TOEFL structure test. To discuss previous researchers have conducted a similar topic regarding using media to improve students' English learning, and some results showed positive effects. However, several studies presented opposite outcomes.

One study about using Edpuzzle interactive videos to improve listening comprehension (Mawaddah & Mustofa, 2022) revealed that implementing the Edpuzzle interactive video benefits students' listening skills. This recent study is almost similar to the prior research. However, this former study only focused on video media toward general English listening skills; meanwhile, the outcome of this research is more specific on learningapps.org toward structure comprehension as an English component and part of the TOEFL test.

Another study by Zakiyuddin (2022) presented the finding of computer-assisted reading, better known as PDF or e-book, toward reading comprehension. The study showed that there is no positive correlation between the two variables. The computer-assisted reading used vocabulary-teaching applications and did not affect students' reading skills. Evidence from the previous study might be similar but shows a negative correlation between the two variables. However, this study adopts learningapps.org as the media, while the previous research addressed the media of computer-assisted reading. The dependent variables researched were also different. The previous one examined reading skills, whereas this study focused on structure and grammatical components.

Later, research by Hille and Cho (2020) mentioned that the placement test using TOEFL ITP or local English proficiency test provided by the institution did not relate to student's academic performance in classes. However, this former research issue is related to this study, TOEFL ITP. However, the previous research only discussed using the TOEFL test as one of the placement tests to decide students' academic levels. Furthermore, this study

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presents explicitly one of the skills examined in TOEFL ITP, structure, and written test, and its relation with learningapps.org as a self-assessment.

Using media like Google Classroom also gives positive relevancy to learning TOEFL (Simatupang, 2021). As a learning management system, Google Classroom assisted the students in every required English skill, such as spoken and written skills. However, this outcome from a prior study only revealed the utilization of Google Classroom on English skill improvement. Therefore, this current research showed the novelty of using another media, namely learningapps.org, on the specific skill of English grammar for TOEFL.

Later, a study addressed the issue of learningapps.org as media for studying English. The study contended that this application had significantly enhanced English comprehension by providing several attractive features (Susanti et al., 2021). Since this is the only study found by a researcher discussing learningapps.org, this research attempts to complete the former study and fill the gap of this media by doing further research on learningapps.org toward TOEFL score, especially structure, resulting that the learningapps.org did not positively affect on TOEFL structure enhancement.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

Conclusion

The investigation of research encompasses the online learning media, namely learningapps.org. Based on the results of the study, this study concludes that there is no significant impact after using learningapps.org on the TOEFL structure score, and implementing this media shows little benefit to the result of the structure TOEFL test.

However, this study's result does matter regarding English teaching activities. Although this study uses quizzes. Moreover, users can freely access this media of learningapps.org, and teachers can create their games or exercises using the available features for their class as part of self-assessment for students. Then, the students can get more exciting exposure to practice their English by using various interactive ways of quiz or games that can enhance their learning of English.

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Limitation

Since learning and understanding grammatical structure has become the most challenging section for TOEFL test-takers, time-consuming and requires high concentration. A particular tutor, a fun learning medium, is highly recommended. Therefore, this study aims to explore using the learningapps.org application in helping students have more exciting grammar practices. However, the result of this study could have portrayed a better influence on students' TOEFL improvement. This outcome could be caused by several factors, such as the less time to explore learningapps.org, which is only three weeks, and lack of supervision by an English teacher on the frequency of using learningapps.org. Another aspect that could limit the maximum result of this study is that the students opted for inappropriate quizzes or grammar games on learningapps.org. For instance, they explore the grammar structure quiz that is too easy or not at the same level as the grammar standards of TOEFL, which only slightly influences students' grammar knowledge.

Implication

By noticing the result of this study, the English teacher could still implement self-assessment media such as learningapps.org to improve other English skills in writing, reading, listening, or speaking. For the students, this application of learningapps.org is still helpful for English learning and enhances the student's competence in any desired skill. Last, for the future researcher, this study could be one of the references for further study, which addressed the similar issue of learning media in evolving the English skill or any research with TOEFL as a primary focus.

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