

A Study on the EFL Learners' Ability in Taking TOEFL Listening Test

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Abstract

The recent study aims at investigating how far the ESP learners' ability and the strategies they employed in mastering the Listening Comprehensions skills of the TOEFL test. The descriptive research design focused on content analysis was applied to gather the data taken by 25 students as participants of the study. In order to see the learners' ability in Listening Comprehension (LC) skills, the 50 questions of Listening Comprehension Test were given through the Pre-Test and Post-Test during one semester course from the Longman Introductory Course For The TOEFL Test (Green Book) by Debora Philips (2004). The observation and the test were the instruments in obtaining the data needed. The data was then analyzed based on the 3 (three) major skills in Listening Comprehension part A, B, and C covered 12 sub-skills or the strategies applied. The result of the ESP learners' ability in Listening Comprehension (LC) was moderately revealed and they were in the level of 'Low Intermediate' level in general. However, there was still few students had not improved yet. Moreover, in Part B (skill 7 – 9) gained the highest scores percentage among two other skills, followed by skill 10 – 12 in Part C Long Talks. Meanwhile, Part A (skill 1 – 6) achieved the lowest scores' percentage in implementing the strategies, specifically in the skill of 4, 2 and 1 (Passives, Negatives, and Restatements) in sequent. Thus, it is suggested that students need to do more exercises on TOEFL Listening Part A suggested strategies by Philips (2004). Moreover, with the advanced of technology, learners can improve their English Listening skills by accessing the free online TOEFL courses from experts in the internet besides doing more drillings on YouTube channels and Podcasts.

Keywords: *EFL learners' ability, listening comprehension skills, TOEFL*

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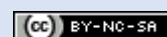
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Introduction

TOEFL as stands for Test of English as a Foreign Language undertaken as a standard for academic English test taken by students or workers applying to their education in a higher level at universities, enter companies and many more both in countries and abroad. Usually, this test is one of the requirements that you must meet for various purposes. Riyanto and Sudiyati, (2015) further stated that institutionalized assessments diagnosed internationally to test people whose native language is not English to discover their competencies in academic English. To know the ability of the TOEFL test takers, there are four skills would be tested namely listening comprehension (LC), structure and written expression (SWE), reading comprehension (RC) in TOEFL Paper-Based, while in the Computer-Based (CBT) and Internet-Based (iBT) Tests, there are two additional skills including Writing and Speaking along with the above skills mentioned. Further, Sari (2019) stated that in providing the expanded records on applicants' English proficiency of jobs' placement or for the universities acknowledgement is in the first place of the TOEFL program.

Gear and Gear (2002) stated that the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is a test carried out by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) in assessing the speakers whose language is not English to see their English proficiency. The appropriate score for the TOEFL test depends on the specific standards of the organization or institution concerned. The TOEFL test was only offered as a paper-based test (Miller & Wheeler, 2003a) up to 1998. Since candidates are not familiar with the TOEFL test, some problems arise. In addition, ETS recognizes that there are significant financial benefits to be gained from converting the paper-based TOEFL test to a computer-based test (CBT). In addition to that, Al-Rawashdeh (2011) claimed that the non-native students or applicants who have willingness to continue their study at American or English-Speaking schools or universities, whether through scholarship programs or non-scholarship programs, are required to take the TOEFL test as one of the requirements to enter the universities. In 2007, ETS (English Testing Service) mentioned that TOEFL scores are acknowledged by more than 6,000 institutions in more than 100 countries.

Besides, there are internet and paper based tests in TOEFL (Murray & Christison: 2010). Those tests cover listening, reading and writing skills in the English language. The formal test of the TOEFL divided into two schemes, Internet-Based TOEFL (iBT) and Paper-Based TOEFL (PBT). Hasik et al. (2008) stated that the iBT is taken by test takers on a pc or laptop, while paper and pencil are provided for the PBT one. Further, David and Pearse (2000) said that in iBT (Internet-Based TOEFL) has four sections, specifically; Listening, Reading, Writing, and Speaking parts. To measure a student's level in relation to the common approved requirement of English competence as one of the best-acknowledged global proficiency testing systems is TOEFL. Several experts' authorizing and certification businesses undertake TOEFL to evaluate English proficiency claimed Harpe (2020). Those ideas likewise were confirmed by Dulan (2012) that many agencies acceded TOEFL or IELTS scores as the English language licensing to pursue their careers and futures jobs or educations. In addition to that, TOEIC and IELTS are also taken along with the TOEFL as English language competence (Stirling: 2015) and utilized by governments, businesses, universities, and institutional scholarship selection committees as a measurement for a candidate's English competency. Particularly, TOEFL Listening Comprehension (LC) skills take into consideration of understanding the test takers formal spoken in English. It is honestly that English skill ability is wanted with inside the current generation of technology, in particular to be linked to others all around the world. Lauder (2008:17) stated that Indonesia considers English as a means to get admission to the global market, clinical knowledge, and the expertise. Moreover, Sariakin (2016) additionally stipulates that as a global language, the English function is highly significant in Indonesia. This is crucial because English skill ability is very important in relation to anyone futures and careers.

Apart from that, in Indonesian ELT curriculum also covers the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) as one of English courses in ELT Classes. As an academic at higher level of education or universities, you must be familiar to this test. The TOEFL Academic test is a prerequisite. One of them is for those who are doing undergraduate courses. In addition to this, the TOEFL subject is one of the requirements you must take as one of the requirement courses to obtain the bachelor degree (S1) in English Study Program (ESP), Educational

Sciences Faculty at University of Timor, Kefamenanu – Indonesia. In order to know the ESP learners' ability in TOEFL Listening skills, the author carried out a pre-test. Based on the TOEFL Listening Comprehension pre-test section. Undoubtedly, the students encountered the complexity of understanding the native speakers of English from the three sections in dialogues, conversation, and talks parts which covers twelve sub-skills, specifically; Part A (the short dialogues skills encompasses skill 1 – 6), Conversations Skill comprises skills 7 – 9 (the question/ anticipate what the question will be, guess the questions in a moment, The topic/ subject or main idea for each conversation, and The order of the answer) and the aftermost is Talks Skill comprises skill 10 – 12 (The question, The topic or main idea and the order of the answer) taken from the Longman Introductory Course For The TOEFL Test (Green Book) by Debora Philips. The author further discovered that the lack of learners' vocabularies could be difficult for them to convey the meaning of the speakers in its normal speeds. There were some causes underlying the decreasing score, due to the linguistics factors and difficult numbers in TOEFL (Amanda, 2016; Snow, 1998), beside the students' background knowledge including motivation (Dewi, Darma, & Suprto, 2015) and self-efficacy (Yoestara & Putri, 2019).

Certain studies had been done previously on the TOEFL Listening (LC) skills. First and foremost, the research conducted by As'ad (2017) purposely in giving an encouragement sight to students on achieving a great score on TOEFL to facilitate the scholars to discover the ideal approach to boost the learners' TOEFL Listening scores targeting on Short Dialogues in section 'A' which was conducted by Foreign Language Intensification Program (BIPA) UIN Allauddin, Makasar. This study carried out a pre-experimental method to acquire the evidence of the facts wished taken from 23 participants as the subject of the research. The results showed that merely 22% of the students attained good classification in the pre-test. The students' scores elevated significantly attaining 89% and categorized as good level due to the post-treatment. The confirmed data by the mean score was 392.61 in the pre-test, meanwhile 445.65 on the post-test. There was a slightly improvement as illustrated in the data of the study. Furthermore, the value of the t-table was higher than the t-test in the significant-testing confirmation. The writer then discovered that there were 54% applied sound-alike word, 38 adopted restatement skill, and merely 8% utilized the choices distinctively over the interview to the whole participants. Additionally, this study showed that the intonation might be established as the correct option in the TOEFL Listening Comprehension (LC) in section one. The situational facts in a communication and the speaker's purpose could be determined by the speaker's tone of voice. Hence, the results and the conclusions indicated that the approach and strategies carried out and discovered on this studies had been definitely proposed. To sum up, the learners' TOEFL scores can barely improve by applying discourse technique and strategies.

In addition to this, another study particularly conducted by Isty, et al. (2017) regarding the Correlation between Self-Efficacy and the Listening Comprehension of the Eight-Semester Students of English Study Program FKIP-UR to the 35 selected students as the sample of the study. The authors employed self-efficacy questionnaires and documentation of TOEFL scores. The results showed that the self-efficacy of the eighth semester students of the FKIP-UR English Study Program was at the intermediate level (180.60), while their listening skills were also at the intermediate level (49.83). Cross tabulation analysis shows that there is a tendency that students have efficacy higher self was found to have a better level of listening ability.

Conversely, Rina and Tiarina (2020) conducted a study to find out the English students' difficulties in answering the TOEFL test of Listening comprehension and the factors of the difficulties done by English Department students of Univesitas Negeri Padang who have taken the TOEFL test from August to December 2020. Descriptive quantitative research design was applied to explore the students' difficulties in answering the 63 questions. The result showed that the students disproved if they had difficulty in answering the listening comprehension test. Nevertheless, the participants agreed on the factors encountered during the process of listening comprehension test were the lack of vocabulary and concentration, length and speed of listening, and physical conditions. In overcoming the difficulties, the students guessed and used clues as their strategies in answering the TOEFL listening comprehension skills. As well as that, Jaya, H.P., Petrus, I., & Kurniawan, D. (2021) undertaken a study to find out students' listening comprehension performance on the problems the students' obstacles, what causes them, and the connection between them. It was done to the bachelor students program of English Educational Study Program. The data was obtained through TOEFL listening test and questionnaires. It showed that 30 % was category and 70% was poor. The students' particular problems were categorized as listeners, materials, and settings. The causes of the obstacles were counted as linguistics knowledge, pronunciation, concentration, and environment.

Briefly, the previous studies have generally focused on the TOEFL Listening Comprehension test's problems and difficulties. Whereas, in this study the author focused on analyzing the EFL learners' ability applying on the Philips' strategies (2004). It signified that the data would be analyzed considering those investigations concerning the three sections in the Listening Comprehension (LC) skills encompasses the 12 sub-skills encompasses skill 1 – 6 in Part 'A' Short Dialogues, Part 'B' Long Conversations Skill comprises skills 7 – 9 (the question/ anticipate what the question will be, Predict the questions in a short period of time, The topic/ subject or main idea for each conversation, and The order of the answer) and the aftermost is Talks Skill comprises skill 10 – 12 (The question, The topic or main idea and the order of the answer) taken from the Longman Introductory Course For The TOEFL Test (Green Book) by Debora Philips (2004).

Method

This study employed descriptive qualitative research design as a non-experimental research approach to collect the data from the 25 English Study Program (ESP) learners as the participant of Educational Sciences Faculty of Timor University. Then, the observation and documentation were the techniques applied in this current research. Further, the data analysis was the process of searching and compiling systematically obtained from both observation and documentation techniques. Data analysis referred to the twelve skills in Listening Comprehension (LC) concerning the Philips' strategies (2004) on the Longman Introductory Course For The TOEFL Test (Green Book) by Debora Philips for the basic learners of TOEFL namely Part A Short Dialogues cover skill 1 to 6 (restatements, negatives, suggestions, passives, conclusions about 'who' and 'where', expressions of agreement), Part B Long Conversations encompass skill 7 to 9 (the question/ anticipate what the question will be, Predict the questions in a short period of time, The topic/ subject or main idea for each conversation, and The order of the answer), and Part C Long Talks dealing with skill 10 to 12 (The question, The topic or main idea and the order of the answer). Consequently, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion were done after analyzing the obtained information.

Results

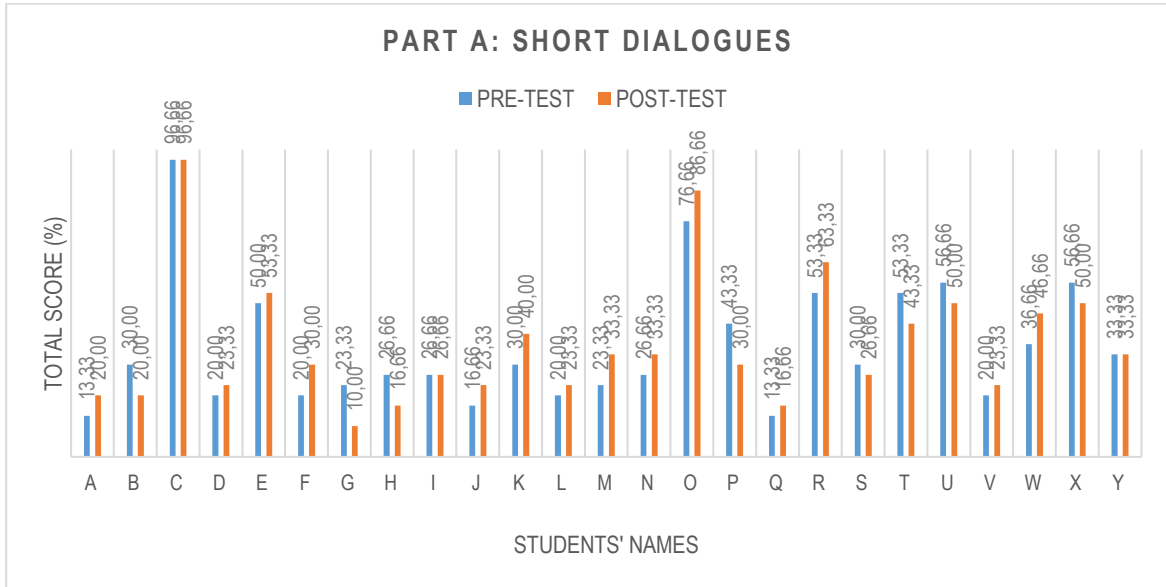
The Listening TOEFL test consists of 50 multiple choice questions Comprehension which should be completed between 30 – 40 minutes. The total number of the participants who have taken this test were 25 students from the sixth semester students of English Study Program, FIP, Unimor Kefamenanu. The students' score results were analyzed based on Philips' Strategies (2004) referred to the Longman Introductory Course For The TOEFL Test (Green Book) of the basic learners of TOEFL. Here are twelve strategies proposed by Philips spreading in 50 diagnostic listening pre-test and post-test TOEFL questions.

Table 1. Philips' Strategies in 50 questions of Diagnostics TOEFL Listening test

Listening Part A: Short Dialogues	Strategies	Pre-test numbers of Qs	Post- Test numbers of Qs
	Skill 1: Restatements	1,3,6,9,12, 5,18, 21, 24, 27,30	1,3,6,9,12,15, 18, 21,24,27,30
	Skill 2: Negatives	4,10,14,19,23,28	4,10,14,19,23,28
	Skill 3: Suggestion	7,13,20,26	7,13,20,26
	Skill 4: Passives	8,29	8,28
	Skill 5: Who and Where	2,11,17,25	2,11,17,25
	Skill 6: Agreement	5,16,22	5,16,22
Listening Part B: Long Conversations	Skill 7: The question Skill 8: The Topic Skill 9: The order of the answer.	31,32,33,34,35, 36,37,38	31,32,33,34,35, 36,37,38
Listening Part C: Long Talks	Skill 10: The question, Skill 11: The topic Skill 12: The order of the answer	39,40,41,42,43, 44,45,46,47,48, 49,50	39,40,41,42,43, 44,45,46,47,48, 49,50

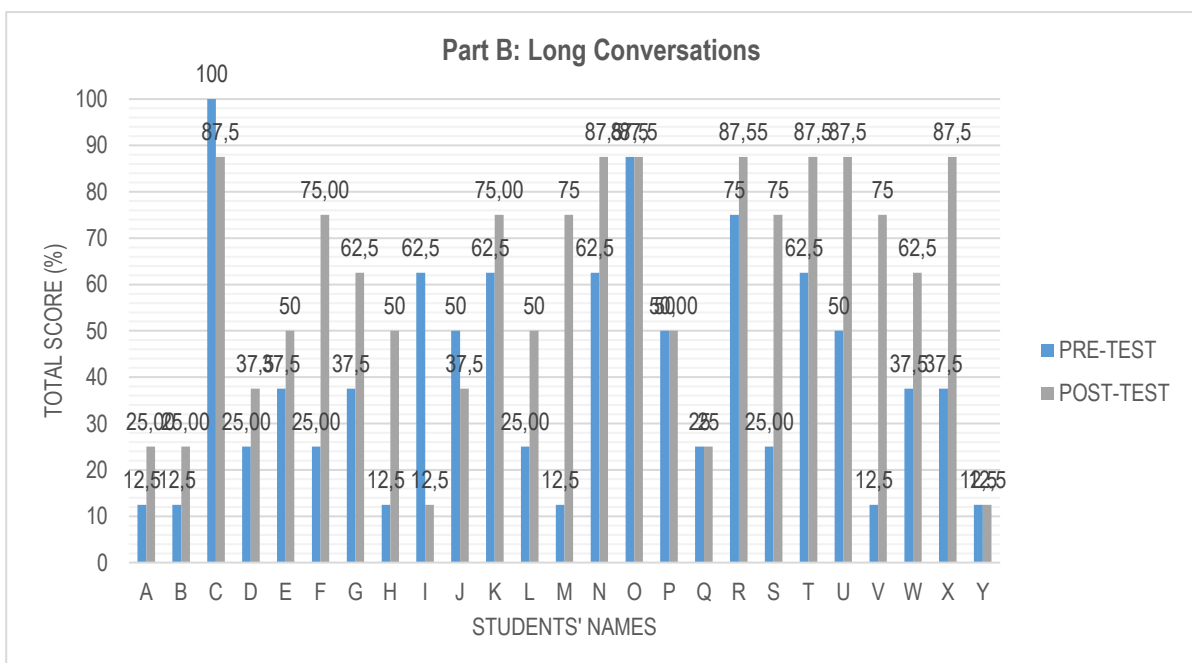
Adapted from: Philips' Diagnostic Chart (Philips, 2004: 357)

Bar Chart 1: Listening Part A: Short Dialogues



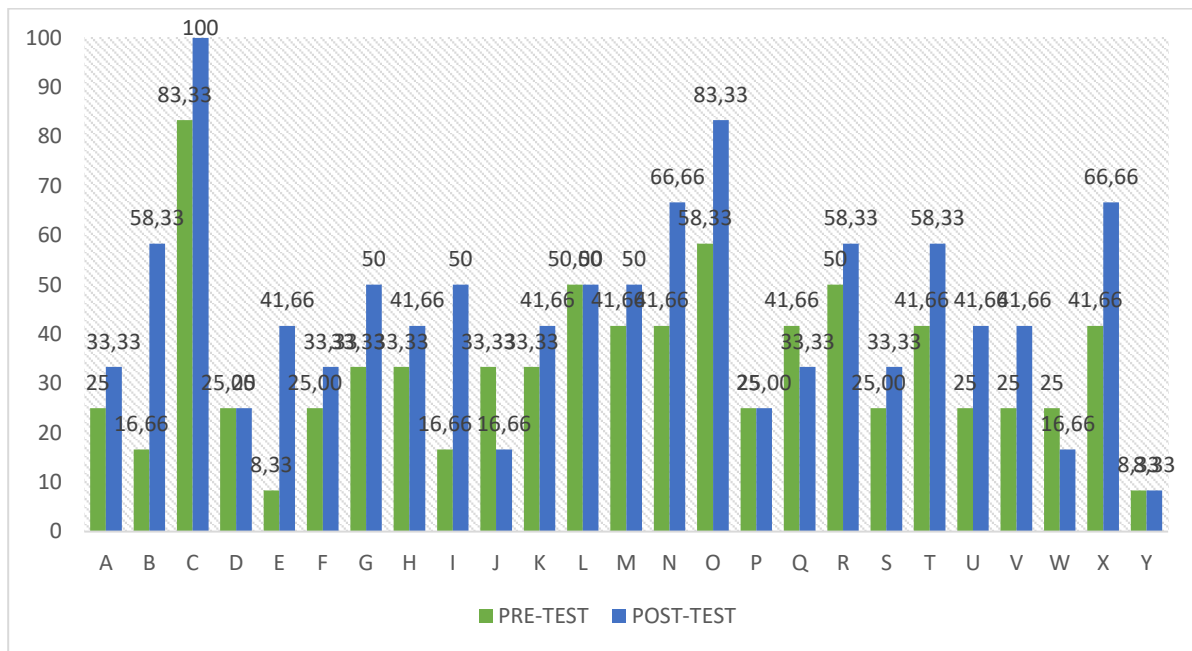
The bar chart above reveals the 25 students' results both in pre-test and post-test in Part A: Short Dialogues of the TOEFL Listening Diagnostics test. Generally, it can be seen that 10 students were categorized getting improvement in their post-test, however 8 students' scores were decrease and 3 students were stable in their scores. Excellently, there was 1 student got the highest score (student C), followed by student O, student R and student E in sequent. Meanwhile, student Q and A got the lowest score of the test. Thus, it indicates that more than half of the students have mastered the TOEFL listening skills in part 'A' test even though it was not significantly improved.

Bar Chart 2: Listening Part B: Long Conversations



The above bar chart shows the 25 students' results both in pre-test and post-test in Part B: Long Conversation of the TOEFL Listening Diagnostics test. From the chart we can see that 18 students got progressively increased. They are student A, B, D, E, F, G, K, L, M, N, R, S, T, U, V, W, and X. While, 3 students decreased on their scores. They are student C, I and J. However, 3 students were steadily in their score achievement. The highest scores were achieved by the student C, followed by students O, R, T, and K successively. While the lowest scores of the students' mastery were students Y followed by student A and B. To compare the students' mastery in part A and C, Part B got significantly improved. It can be concluded that in part B most students have mastered the TOEFL Listening skills on the questions, the topic, and the order of the questions skills.

Bar Chart 3: Listening Part 'C': Long Talks



The above bar chart shows the 25 students' results both in pre-test and post-test in Part C: Long Talks of the TOEFL Listening Diagnostics test. From the chart we can see that 8 students (C, O, X, T, B, I, G, and I) were considered improved significantly in mastering skills 10 – 12 in part C of the test. Nevertheless, the 2 students decreased moderately in their scores achievement. Meanwhile, 3 students steadily performed in their scores. Moreover, the highest scores were attained by student C still, followed by students O, X, and N in the sequent. Whilst, the lowest scores were gained by student Y followed by student W. It can be determined that in Part C many students have mastered the three Listening skills after after Part B skills.

Discussion

From the result, it is revealed that the students of English Study Program of FIP Unimor Kefamenanu implemented strategies suggested by Philips (2004) in Part A (Short Dialogues), Part B (Long Conversation), and Part C (Long Talks) of the Listening TOEFL Test with the level of 'Low Intermediate' in general. The author found that some of the ESP learners have implemented the strategies suggested by Philips (2004) in answering the questions in all parts of Listening Comprehension (LC) skills. This means that many students have apply all strategies suggested by Philips (2004) in answering the Listening questions on Part A, Part B, and Part C. However, there was few learners have not improve yet started from 'Elementary' level in the Pre-Test of TOEFL Diagnostic to 'Low intermediate' level in TOEFL Diagnostic Post-Test. Apart from this, there were few students started from 'Low Intermediate' level to 'Intermediate' level. On the other hand, one student started from 'Advanced' level and be still in 'Advanced' level in general. The score was always 100 in all three parts of the TOEFL Listening test. To sum up this, many students might not implemented the twelve strategies suggested by Philips (2004) in the course book; thus they were unfamiliar with the strategies and fail in answering the questions in the TOEFL Listening skills part A, B, and C.

In this current research, the lowest implemented strategy is skill 1 - 6 in Part A Short Dialogues specifically in th 'Negatives', 'Passive' and 'Restatement' skills. Meanwhile, skill 7 – 9 in Part B of the test attained the highest

achievement of the students' scores followed by skill 10 – 12 in Part C Long Talks dealing with the topic, the question and the order of the question. Alternatively, the highest implemented strategies was in skill 7 - 9 in Part B Long Conversations of TOEFL Listening Comprehension (LC).

The result of this study briefly revealed that the strategies proposed by Philips (2004) are efficient in improving the students' score in Listening Comprehension (LC) Skills of the TOEFL test where it significantly improved all the students' scores during one semester of studying the basic TOEFL course. Besides mastering the TOEFL strategies suggested by Philips (2004) for the basic learners of TOEFL, they can also improve themselves by drilling the TOEFL Listening Comprehension on YouTube channels or Podcasts. Moreover, it is suggested by Adnan (2014) to watch English movies as well as listening to the English songs (Hidayat, 2013).

Conclusion

Based on the result of data analysis above, the author concluded that the students' level of mastery in applying the Philips (2004) strategies generally was on the level of 'Intermediate'. However, there was still few students had improvement from the 'Elementary' level to Low Intermediate, Low intermediate to Intermediate, and Low intermediated to advanced level. Moreover, skill 7 - 9 in TOEFL Listening Comprehension Part B encompasses attained the highest level of the students' scores, followed by skill 10 – 12 in Part 'C' encompass the topic, the question, and the order of the answer got the moderate level of percentage among other skills, meanwhile, skill 1 to 6 in Part A Short Dialogues concerning to restatements, negatives, suggestions, passives, conclusions about 'who' and 'where', expressions of agreement were categorized as the lowest level of students' mastery in implementing the strategies suggested by Philips (2004) specifically in skill 4, 2 and 1.

Generally, the students' ability in the TOEFL Listening Comprehension (LC) test was categorized in the level of 'Low Intermediate'. There was most students improved significantly, however few were still in the low level of achievement. Thus, it is suggested that students need to do more exercises in this book in order to master the basic TOEFL in Listening Comprehension skills related to twelve strategies suggested in the TOEFL Listening Comprehension (LC) skills. Moreover, with the advanced of technology, students do not only practicing their listening through watching English movies and Listening to English songs, however, they can access the free online TOEFL courses from the internet besides doing more drillings on YouTube channels and Podcasts.

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