

Optimizing Lecturers' English Proficiency through TOEFL Mentoring via e-Learning and Zoom Meeting

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Abstract. One of the main challenges that lecturers face in preparing for doctoral studies is meeting the requirements for English proficiency certificates, such as TOEFL, which often require high scores. This challenge is mainly felt by lecturers who are not graduates of the English study program. To help address this issue, the Community Service (PkM) program aims to enhance the English proficiency of lecturers at Universitas Nurul Jadid through e-learning-based TOEFL mentoring based on e-learning and Zoom Meeting. The method of implementing this program includes the stage of planning, implementation, as well as monitoring and evaluation, with a total of 33 lecturers from Universitas Nurul Jadid. This program involves the use of online learning technology to facilitate learning flexibility, considering the lecturers' busy schedules with teaching and administrative responsibilities. The results of the program showed a significant improvement in participants' TOEFL scores from pre-test to post-test. Formative and summative evaluation data, including mid-test and post-test, indicate that this technology-based approach effectively enhances lecturers' English proficiency. The program not only managed to achieve its main goal but also provided insights for the development of similar programs in the future.

Katakunci: Dosen; Kemampuan Bahasa Inggris; TOEFL

Abstrak. Salah satu tantangan utama yang dihadapi dosen dalam mempersiapkan jenjang studi doctoral adalah memenuhi persyaratan sertifikat kemampuan Bahasa Inggris, seperti TOEFL, yang sering kali memerlukan skor tinggi. Tantangan ini terutama dirasakan oleh dosen yang bukan lulusan program studi Bahasa Inggris. Untuk membantu mengatasi tantangan tersebut, program Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat (PkM) ini bertujuan meningkatkan kemampuan Bahasa Inggris dosen Universitas Nurul Jadid melalui pendampingan TOEFL berbasis e-learning dan Zoom Meeting. Metode pelaksanaan program ini mencakup tahap perencanaan, pelaksanaan, serta monitoring dan evaluasi, dengan subjek kegiatan sebanyak 33 dosen Universitas Nurul Jadid. Program ini melibatkan penggunaan teknologi pembelajaran daring untuk memfasilitasi fleksibilitas belajar, mengingat kesibukan dosen

dalam tugas mengajar dan administratif. Hasil program menunjukkan peningkatan signifikan pada skor TOEFL peserta dari pre-test ke post-test. Data evaluasi formatif dan sumatif, termasuk mid-test dan post-test, mengindikasikan bahwa pendekatan berbasis teknologi ini efektif dalam meningkatkan kompetensi Bahasa Inggris peserta. Program ini tidak hanya berhasil mencapai tujuan utamanya tetapi juga memberikan wawasan untuk pengembangan program serupa di masa depan.

1. Introduction

Language is one of the fundamental aspects in the process of learning and developing science. Proper language proficiency is a primary prerequisites in the academic world, especially for lecturers who serve as educators, researchers, and scientific communicators (Himawati, 2017). With the increasing demands of globalization and academic mobility, mastery of foreign languages, especially English, is becoming increasingly important for lecturers who plan to pursue doctoral studies.

Universitas Nurul Jadid, a private university in Probolinggo, is a merger of three previously established higher education institutions under the Nurul Jadid Foundation. With a total of 188 permanent lecturers, where 28 lecturers have completed their doctoral studies and 160 others hold a master's degree, the university has great potential for further development. Encouraging permanent lecturers to pursue doctoral studies is one strategic step that must be taken promptly. Lecturers with doctoral degrees have a deeper and broader understanding of their fields, which can be applied in an academic environment in accordance with their expertise (Lam et al., 2019). This high-quality teaching will create a more dynamic and inspiring learning environment (Marpaung et al., 2018).

In addition, lecturers who have completed doctoral studies tend to be more active in research, developing innovative projects that are relevant to the current needs (Kurnia, 2022). The results of these studies will enhance the university's reputation nationally and internationally and provide practical solutions to various societal problems. Universities with a high proportion of doctoral lecturers generally have better reputations, attract high-quality students from both domestic and international spheres, and achieve higher accreditation (Kurniawansyah et al., 2019; Riyono et al., 2023). Doctoral lecturers also open up opportunities for inter-university research collaborations and funding from various

research institutions, enabling the university to develop larger and more impactful research programs (Minna, 2023).

To realize this goal, Universitas Nurul Jadid needs to provide a further study mentoring program to prepare lecturers to immediately complete doctoral studies, either through national scholarships or campus scholarships. One of the important requirements in the process of preparing for the scholarship is an English language proficiency certificate, such as TOEFL ITP or IELTS (Utami & Pirmansyah, 2018). TOEFL is an international standardized test that determines a person's ability to use and understand English at an academic level. Its results are often used as a requirement for admission to universities in countries where English is the medium of instruction (Rifiyanti et al., 2023). (Schissel, 2024) added that English test can not only be used to apply for job applications, but also for pursuing studies both domestically and abroad. It is important for lecturers and students to have TOEFL proficiency (Aniuranti et al., 2024). Achieving TOEFL good score is not an easy thing. One of the reasons why the TOEFL test feels difficult is because a person may not prepare well (Fitria, 2022). In addition, (Samad et al., 2017) stated that getting a high TOEFL score is not easy. TOEFL participants, especially those who are not graduates of the English Study Program, need to prepare thoroughly because obtaining a good TOEFL score is very difficult.

Self-preparation can be done by self-study or taking intensive training. Training is defined as techniques focusing on learning the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes for starting a job or task, or for improving performance (Basri & Rusdiana, 2015). However, due to the limited time and busy schedule of lecturers, learning preparation cannot be done optimally. Therefore, this situation has prompted the academic community of the English Language Education Department to conduct a community service program by providing TOEFL training using Zoom Meeting and Learning Management System (LMS) through UNUJA's e-learning platform to optimize the English language proficiency of Universitas Nurul Jadid lecturers. It is hoped that this training will improve their English proficiency, making them more prepared to apply for doctoral scholarships and achieve higher academic accomplishments.

2 Method

The This community service activity was carried out from March to May 2024 at Universitas Nurul Jadid. The subjects of this PkM were 33

permanent lecturers of Universitas Nurul Jadid who planned to pursue doctoral studies. The method used in this activity is participatory action research (PAR) (Afandi et al., 2022) that included several steps as indicated in Figure 1:

Community Service Method

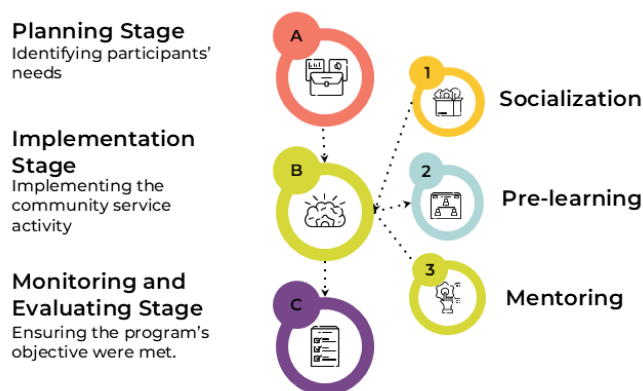


Figure 1. Community Service Method

a. Planning stages

The program began by identifying the lecturers' needs for English material used to prepare for doctoral scholarships or further studies. This identification was conducted through interview with the lecturers at Universitas Nurul Jadid to measure their current English proficiency and the difficulties they faced in mastering TOEFL material. Based on the interview results, a curriculum was developed that covers various aspects tested in the TOEFL. The TOEFL material includes basic skills essential for supporting oral or written communication, such as Listening, Structure, and Reading skills (Syafii & Sugianto, 2017).

In addition, in this stage, the necessary technology and resources were mapped out. Since the program was aimed at lecturers who are also busy with teaching and campus administrative duties, adequate technological infrastructure was required for both participants and the organizing team. The service team agreed to use e-learning as a medium for independent learning and to conduct learning evaluations in the form of quizzes and tests, as well as using Zoom Meeting as a medium for learning interactions with tutors. Therefore, the service team ensured that all participants had access to the required devices, such as computers or smartphones, and a stable internet connection. The service team selected Universitas Nurul

Jadid's e-learning platform, which has features that support TOEFL learning, such as question banks, discussion forums, and simulation exam features. This e-learning platform was also chosen to facilitate distance learning with interactive materials.

b. Implementation stages

1) Socialization

At the implementation stage, lecturers were informed about the importance of mentoring programs through various media, such as telegram groups and university's internal social media. In this stage, they were also given information about the implementation schedule, the material to be covered, and methods to carry out learning through e-learning and Zoom Meeting. With this socialization, it was expected that lecturers could prepare themselves and manage their time to follow the program properly.

2) Pre-learning

After the socialization stage, the program began with a pre-test to map out the lecturers' initial competencies before the mentoring was provided. In this session, lecturers were given the opportunity to work on pre-test questions through e-learning, with only one attempt allowed. The pre-test consisted of 140 questions and required 115 minutes to complete. The pre-test questions were designed to be as similar as possible to the real TOEFL test.

3) Mentoring Session

Next, the mentoring session was carried out with an explanation of the material according to the e-learning modules that have been prepared in accordance with the planned curriculum. Each module includes learning materials that can be accessed at any time by participants. Lecturers were given the freedom to study independently according to their available time. This e-learning materials were equipped with learning videos, practice questions, and quizzes to measure participants' understanding. In addition, an online discussion forum was also provided to facilitate interaction between participants and tutors, creating an interactive learning environment despite being conducted online.

During the implementation of the program, Zoom Meeting was used as a means for regularly scheduled face-to-face sessions. These sessions served as a place for reviewing learned material, deeper discussions on challenging questions, and real-

time TOEFL exam simulations in these sessions, the lecturers could practice answering questions within a time limit, as in the actual test, and receive direct feedback from tutors. The use of Zoom Meeting allowed for direct interaction between participants and tutors, which is crucial in improving participants' understanding and confidence.

c. Monitoring and evaluation stages

To ensure the program's objectives were met, monitoring and evaluation were carried out regularly. Monitoring was conducted periodically through progress evaluations achieved by each participant. In this activity, evaluations were carried out twice, namely at the mid-term and post-test stages. The evaluations were conducted using paper-based tests to assess the learning that had been provided. Besides, participants were also given the experience of working on the actual TOEFL test

3 Results

a. Planning Stage

The planning stage in the TOEFL mentoring program for lecturers at Universitas Nurul Jadid was conducted using a comprehensive and in-depth approach. This program began by identifying the lecturers' English proficiency levels, particularly in relation to preparing for doctoral scholarships or advanced studies. This identification was carried out through in-depth interviews with the lecturers (Figure 2), providing the community service team with a better understanding of their English proficiency levels as well as the specific challenges they faced in preparing for the TOEFL exam.



Figure 2. Interview with Lecturers

The interview involved a series of questions focusing on lecturers' experiences with previous TOEFL tests, if any, as well as their interest in participating in the program. The interview results showed that 33 lecturers at Universitas Nurul Jadid were interested in participating in the TOEFL mentoring program in order to prepare themselves for scholarship opportunities for further studies. Additionally, the interview revealed that the majority of lecturers had significant difficulties in the Structure and Written Expression and Reading sections, which often became the main obstacles in achieving a satisfactory TOEFL score required for scholarships or advanced studies.

Based on the information gathered, the community service team then compiled a mentoring module that was specifically designed to address these needs. This module covered a variety of materials that include listening, structure, and reading. Each module was designed with an interactive and practical approach, incorporating sample questions that closely matched the actual TOEFL exam format. The modules were developed using materials from *Complete Course for the TOEFL TEST* by Deborah Phillips (Phillips, 2001), which were adapted to meet the participants' needs by adding explanations in Indonesian. In addition, the modules included practice sessions aimed at boosting the lecturers' confidence in tackling TOEFL questions.

Once the modules were compiled, the next planning stage is the mapping of the technology and resources needed to support the implementation of the program. Considering that the program was intended for lecturers with busy teaching and administrative duties, it was crucial to ensure that the technology used would facilitate flexible and efficient learning. The community service team decided to use the existing e-Learning platform at Universitas Nurul Jadid as the primary medium for self-learning. This platform was chosen because it was already familiar among the lecturers and had features suitable for TOEFL practice, such as a question bank, discussion forums, and a simulation exam feature.

Furthermore, the team also considered the accessibility factors for the participants. As part of the planning, they mapped out the lecturers' available technological devices, including the availability of computers or smartphones and the quality of their internet connections. The team ensured that each participant had adequate access to the necessary devices to participate in the online learning.

As a medium of interaction between participants and the tutors, the community service team decided to use Zoom Meeting. This decision was based on the fact that Zoom Meeting was well-known among the lecturers, easy to use, and capable of supporting interaction needs in distance learning. Zoom Meeting was used for regularly scheduled virtual face-to-face sessions where lecturers could directly discuss with tutors, gain further explanations on challenging topics, and practice TOEFL questions in real-time under supervision and guidance from the tutors.

In addition, to enhance the effectiveness of learning process, the community service team optimized the features available on the e-Learning platform at Universitas Nurul Jadid. The question bank feature was used to provide practice questions that could be accessed by lecturers at any time, enabling them to practice independently according to their availability. The discussion forum allowed lecturers to engage in discussions with fellow participants and tutors, sharing tips and solving problems collaboratively. Meanwhile, the quiz feature was utilized to conduct TOEFL exam simulations that resembled actual test conditions, both in terms of question format and time constraints.

These simulations became an essential part of the lecturers' preparation, offering practical experience that helped them become familiar with the time pressure and question types they would face in the actual TOEFL exam. With all the planning stages completed, the program was ready to proceed to the implementation phase.

b. Implementation Stage

The implementation stage began with a socialization activity aimed at introducing the program to participants and emphasizing the importance of their participation. Socialization was carried out through a Zoom Meeting attended by the Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs, the Head of the Language Center, tutors, and participants of the activity. Through this activity, the lecturers received complete information regarding the program's objectives, implementation schedule, the materials to be discussed, and the technical execution of the learning process, which would be conducted through the e-learning platform and Zoom Meeting. The information was delivered in an easily understandable format, with infographics and a clear schedule, to facilitate lecturers in preparing themselves and planning their time to participate in this program.

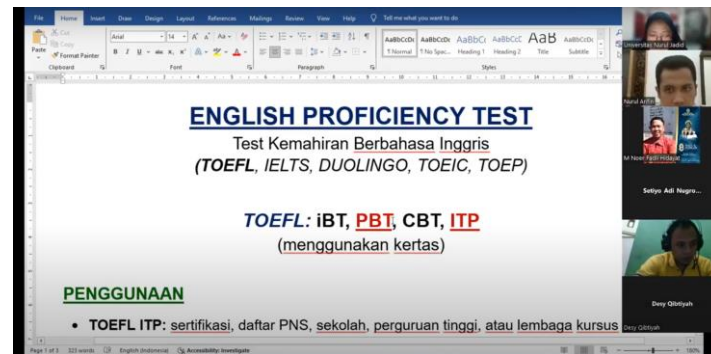


Figure 3. Socializing the Activities

Figure 2 shows the socialization of activities carried out before the mentoring activities are carried out. In this session, lecturers were given a general explanation of the structure and format of the TOEFL exam, as well as basic strategies to deal with it. An experienced TOEFL tutor provided tips and tricks for handling each section of the exam and examples of frequently appearing questions. This session also included a Q&A, allowing the lecturers to clarify various issues related to the TOEFL exam.

After the socialization, the mentoring program continued with the pre-learning stage, which began with a pre-test through e-Learning. In this session, lecturers were given the opportunity to work on pre-test questions through e-learning, and were allowed only one attempt. The pre-test consisted of 140 questions with a completion duration of 115 minutes.

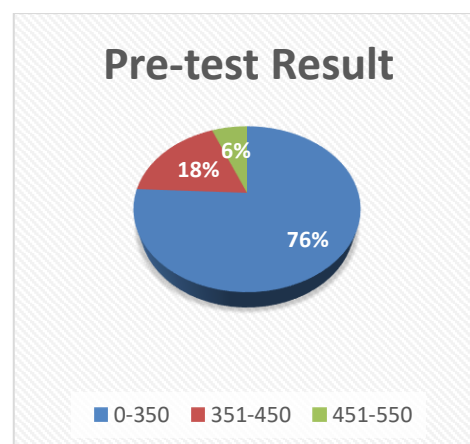


Figure 4. Pre-test Result

Figure 4 displays the distribution of pre-test results from participants of the TOEFL mentoring program at Universitas Nurul

The mentoring sessions are not only limited to the e-learning module, but are also supported by face-to-face sessions scheduled periodically via Zoom Meeting. In this session, lecturers had the opportunity to review the material that had been studied independently, discuss difficult questions, and simulate the TOEFL exam in real-time. This simulation is designed to simulate real test conditions, with time limited for each section of the test, allowing the lecturers to experience something close to the real TOEFL exam.

Each Zoom Meeting session is led by a tutor who acts as a facilitator in the discussion and provides immediate feedback to the lecturers. Tutors provide specific corrections and suggestions for each participant based on their answers in the simulation, enabling the lecturers to correct their mistakes and improve their skills before facing the actual TOEFL exam. The use of Zoom Meetings allows for direct interaction between the participating lecturers and the tutor, which is crucial for enhancing understanding and building confidence among the lecturers in actively using English, as shown in Figure 6.

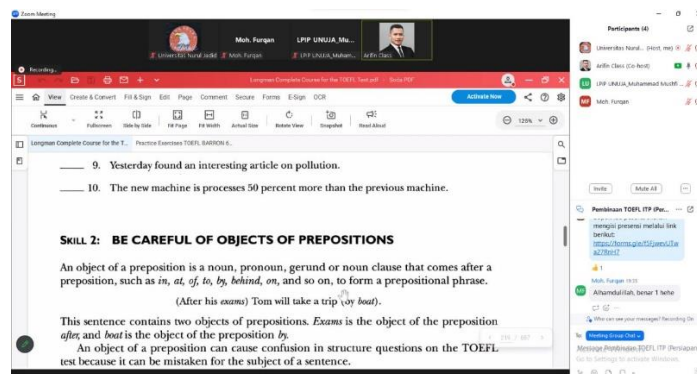


Figure 5 Mentoring via Zoom Meeting

The implementation of this program was carried out 14 meetings from March 24 to May 31, 2024. The service team also involves continuous monitoring of each lecturer's progress. Every learning activity conducted by the participating lecturers on the e-learning platform is recorded and analyzed to determine how far they have completed the existing modules and how their quiz results are. This information is used by tutors to provide more personalized guidance and adjust the next learning material according to the needs of each participant.

c. Monitoring and Evaluation Stage

Monitoring was conducted periodically, focusing on two critical moments in the evaluation process, namely the mid-term test and the post-test. The mid-term test was held in the middle of the program, aiming to measure how well participants had understood the material provided up to that point. This test used a paper-based format that resembled the actual TOEFL exam, allowing the instructors to not only evaluate material mastery but also to gain firsthand experience in facing real exam situations.

Post-test was conducted at the end of the program as part of summative evaluation. This post-test also used a paper-based format and was designed to resemble the actual TOEFL exam conditions. The goal was to evaluate the improvement of the English competence of lecturers after participating in a series of intensive learning modules and mentoring sessions. The post-test results provided valuable data for the community service team to assess the overall effectiveness of the program, as well as a benchmark for identifying faculty members who need follow-up mentoring or additional sessions before they face the actual TOEFL exam.

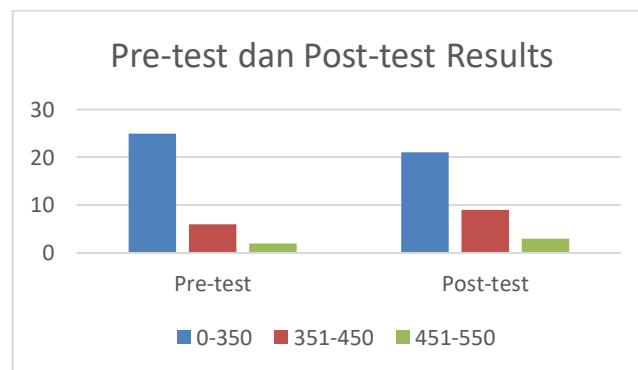


Figure 6. Pre-test and Post-test Result

Figure 7 is a bar chart that shows the distribution of participants' scores before (pre-test) and after (post-test) participating in the language coaching program. The three score categories shown in this chart are 0-350, 351-450, and 451-550, which are represented by blue, orange, and gray, respectively. In the pre-test results, the majority of participants were in the score category of 0-350, with a approximately 25 people. This indicates that most participants start the program with a low level of English language proficiency. A small number of participants, about 5 people, were in the 351-450 score category, and only a very few, less than 5 people, were in the 451-550 category.

After participating in the coaching program, the post-test results showed significant changes. Although the number of participants in the 0-350 category remained high, there was a noticeable decrease to about 20 people. Meanwhile, the number of participants in the 351-450 category increased to around 8 people, and the number of participants in the 451-550 category also increased even though it remained below 5 people. Overall, this graph shows that after participating in the coaching program, there was a positive shift in the distribution of participants' scores, with more participants successfully improving their scores from the 0-350 category to the higher category. This indicates the success of the program in helping participants improve their English skills.

4 Discussion

The activity of optimizing English proficiency for lecturers at Universitas Nurul Jadid (UNUJA) is carried out by providing TOEFL mentoring for three months, from March to May 2024. This activity began with socialization related to the importance of this activity in supporting the achievement of the doctoral study level. In addition to providing education related to English language competency, the service team also conducted interviews to explore the extent of the lecturers' understanding of the TOEFL test and the challenges they face in preparing for it.

The interview results showed that 33 lecturers were interested in participating in the TOEFL mentoring program to prepare themselves to participate in the further study scholarship competition. In addition, the majority of lecturers had obstacles in the structure and written test and reading sections. This information serves as the basis for the service team in designing the mentoring modules.

Before providing TOEFL mentoring, the community service team provided a pre-test to participants as a first step to assess the lecturer's English proficiency. The pre-test is administered through an e-learning platform that is familiar to UNUJA lecturers. The pre-test consisted of 140 questions with a duration of 115 minutes. The results of the pre-test showed that 76% of the participants were in the range of 0-350 which indicates that the majority of lecturers need a significant improvement in English proficiency.

The learning media used in this mentoring program are e-learning and Zoom Meeting. According to research by (Almahasees et al., 2021), the

integration of e-learning in higher education has been proven to be effective in increasing accessibility and flexibility of learning for students. In this context, the selection of Learning Management Systems (LMS) as independent learning media allows lecturers to access materials anytime and anywhere, which is crucial given their busy teaching schedules and other administrative tasks. However, the effectiveness of LMS is highly dependent on the instructional design used. If the e-learning materials are not well-designed or interactive, participants may lose motivation, which will impact learning outcomes. Therefore, the development of interactive and practice-based content, such as TOEFL exam simulations, is key to the success of LMS usage in this program.

In addition, the use of Zoom Meeting as a medium of virtual face-to-face interaction added value to the learning process. With zoom, tutors and participants have the possibility for direct interaction, which is important for deepening understanding of complex material. However, research conducted by (Bao, 2020) showed that online learning through platforms such as Zoom has its own challenges, such as limitations in maintaining participant engagement, difficulties in time management during the session, and potential technical issues. Therefore, the successful use of Zoom in the program is relies on the tutor's ability to facilitate dynamic discussions and effectively manage sessions to ensure that all participants can engage fully.

After the TOEFL mentoring activity, a summative evaluation was carried out in the form of a post-test. The evaluation was carried out using the Paper-based test and designed to resemble the actual TOEFL exam conditions. The results of the post-test showed significant changes. Although the number of participants in the 0-350 category is still high, it can be seen that the number had decreased to around 20 people. Meanwhile, the number of participants in the 351-450 category increased to around 8 people, and the number of participants in the 451-550 category also increased even though it remained below 5 people. Overall, this graph shows that after participating in the coaching program, there was a positive shift in the distribution of participants' scores. This evaluation provided a clear picture of the progress achieved by participants during the program. However, as revealed by (Black & Wiliam, 1998), formative evaluation should be conducted continuously and involve constructive feedback to truly help participants improve their performance. In this context, although summative evaluation through post-test provided useful final data, it is important to ensure that each participant gets specific and relevant feedback during the learning process, not just at the end of the program.

In addition to test-based evaluation, collecting feedback from participants through questionnaires is also an important step in understanding participant satisfaction and needs. However, the success of this feedback collection depends largely on how well the questionnaire is designed. According to research by (Nardi, 2018), an effective questionnaire must include clear, unambiguous questions that are relevant to the participants' experiences. Otherwise, the feedback obtained may not fully reflect the reality faced by the participants, which could lead to less accurate conclusions and recommendations.

5 Conclusion

The conclusion of the community service activities conducted at Universitas Nurul Jadid showed that the e-learning and Zoom Meeting-based TOEFL mentoring program successfully achieved its main objective, which is to improve the English competence of lecturers. The increase in scores from pre-test to post-test indicates that the majority of participants experienced significant improvement, especially in English proficiency relevant to TOEFL preparation. The implementation of the program that combines e-learning technology and virtual face-to-face, proved effective in providing learning flexibility for lecturers who have teaching commitments and other administrative responsibilities. The formative and summative evaluations applied, including mid-test and post-test, provided valuable data on the effectiveness of the program and areas that need further improvement.

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