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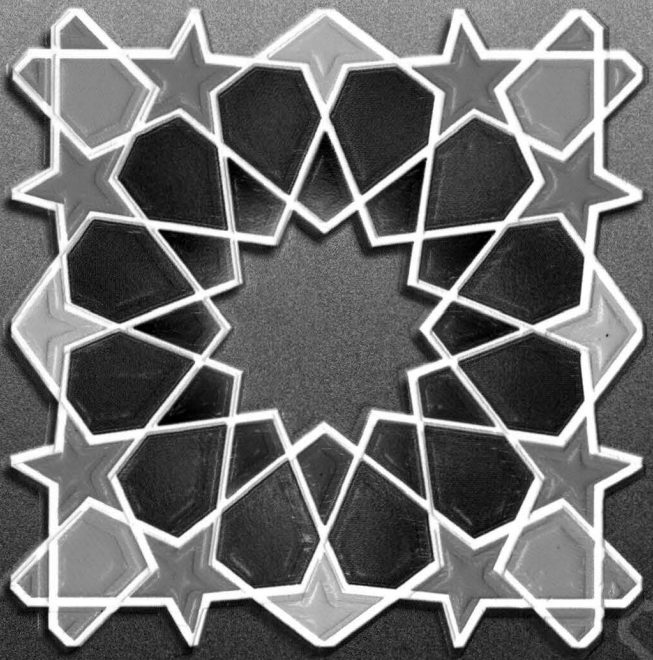

مجلة نصف سنوية ـ علمية ـ محكمة تصدر عن كلية التربية جامعة قطر العدد (١٠)

TOEFL Scores as an Entrance Requirement for the Department of English at the University of Qatar

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Abstract

This study attempted to investigate the following questions: Is there a relationship between TOEFL scores and High School percentages? Is there a relationship between TOEFL scores and student performance in first year Basic English courses? Is the TOEFL score set by the English Department adequate for accepting students as majors of English at the University of Qatar? A sample of female student was studied; it consists of those students who applied to enroll in the English Department for in the Fall Semester of the Academic year 2002/2003.

The study reached two main conclusions: the first answers the first question of the study concerning the relationship between TOEFL scores and High School percentages; the second answers the second question of the study since the sample indicates strong relationships between TOEFL scores and students' performance in first year Basic English courses. Based on these two results the study answers the third question with a recommendation that the department should accept students with higher TOEFL scores.

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Introduction

TOEFL is one of the most common tests for level proficiency of English as a foreign language. Many non-native English students who seek to enroll in universities where the language of Education is English are required to achieve a certain command level of English which is reflected in certain pre-set TOEFL scores by the various educational institutes. Most universities set TOEFL scores as standard 500-550 points for undergraduates and 550 points for graduate students.

It is very common that students and institutions, also, face the problem of achieving the required score worldwide. In an article about TOEFL scores in the "Korea Herald", the author talks about the difficulty of achieving TOEFL scores for one who has not lived in an English speaking country:

> "According to TOEFL teachers, it is rare for a high school student to master the test. "A perfect score is even hard for grown-ups to achieve since you need a fair amount of knowledge and background information in various subjects," said Kin Dae-kyun, an English instructor at the YBM language institute in Chongno. "Middle or high school students who have lived abroad for three to four years would normally get TOEFL scores of 580 to 600".

Another problem involves the different cultures of non-native English users. This may affect the level of student proficiencies in English which in turn affects their enrolling in universities where English is a requirement. In a comparative study about EFL testing and admission in Finland and Japan by Garant (2000) , the results

show that language testing for university admission in the two countries are significantly different. The part of the study relevant to this research is : that 90% of high school students in both countries study English; yet the Finn students showed more proficiency in English than the Japanese students according to TOEFL results. This indicates that TOEFL could predict the performance of these students at university level. However; Al-Musawai and Al-Ansari (1999) claim in another study that TOEFL is not an effective predictor of students' academic achievement at university level for the students of the University of Bahrain. This result contradicts the results of this study of students who major in English at the University of Qatar (QU).

Wainer and Lukhele (1997) raise a different issue related to TOEFL scores. They have worked the reliability of TOEFL scores. This issue is quite important because it justifies why different institutes insist on choosing TOFEL as an admission requirement. The English Department at (QU) opted for the TOEFL because of its "reliability" for reflecting student levels in English.

Some universities use additional measures with TOEFL for the enrollment of students. Boldt and Courtney (1997) implied in their study that using cut scores as rigid standards for admission was rare. They found that TOEFL scores were often connected with essay and other locally administered tests.

The Scope of the Study

The English Department at the University of Qatar (QU) requires an entrance exam for the enrollment of majors. Until the academic year 2001/2002, the Michigan Placement Test Battery (MT) was used for entrance purposes. Aleasa (1994) recommended that this test be replaced with other tests which are more suitable for admission, and that further studies be made in this area to find a

suitable admission tool for major enrollment into the English Department at the University of Qatar. The English Department used a different test, the TOEFL as of the beginning of the academic year 2002/2003.

The problem concerns the TOEFL score set by the English Department. Some procedures that were taken to arrive at this score:

(1) A commercial TOEFL was administered on the 1st year students for the academic years 1999/2000 and 2000/2001 two weeks after they enrolled in the department to see the level of students in the TOEFL test.

(2) An extensive search was carried out for a comparative score chart between Michigan Placement Test Battery scores and TOEFL score for the purpose of comparison.

(3) The English department accepted intermediate level of English based on (MT). That is, a score of (55/100) points or higher is used for enrollment purposes; hence, a study by the entrance exam committee within the department found that:
   - (55/100) MT score equals, more or less, 430 points in TOEFL score.
   - The English Department decided to accept students who score 425 or higher in the TOEFL to enroll as majors.

The question to raise here is this: IS this score adequate to allow students to major in English? It must be noted here, that High School graduates in Qatar are accepted in the different universities on the basis of an overall grade percentages for the last year subjects in High school. In addition, the English Department at the University of Qatar carries on its shoulders the task of teaching Basic English courses in the first year over a period of two full semesters. This is done to enable students cope with more specialized linguistic and

literary courses in English. Our main concern here is to find out whether the **TOEFL score** can predict students performance in the Basic English courses taught in the department in the first place.

This leads to two questions. The first deals with the relationship between TOEFL scores and High school overall grade percentages: Do high school percentages correlate with high TOEFL scores? This question focuses basically on the idea: if a High School graduate scores a high percentage average, does he/she necessarily score high in TOEFL? The other question concerns the performance of students in the first year English courses and if there is a relationship between their course scores and TOEFL scores; in other words if a student scores high in TOEFL does it mean he/she will score high in the Basic English Department courses?

The basic English Department language courses (Table 1) taught in the first year appear in the following table (for course description see Appendix 1):

Table (1)
The Basic English Department Languages

1st Year Courses in the English Department				
Course	**Title**	**Credit**	**Contact**	**Pre-Requisite**
The 1st Semester				
212110	English (1)	4	6	-
212112	Grammar (1)	2	4	-
212114	Writing (1)	2	4	-
The 2nd Semester				
212111	English (2)	4	6	212110
212113	Grammar (2)	2	4	212112
212115	Writing (2)	2	4	212114

In summary, it can be said that this study compares TOEFL scores in two specific areas:

(1) High School overall grade percentage of last year subjects.
(2) Student performance in the first year language courses in the English Department.

Questions Raised by the Present Study

This study attempts to investigate the following:

- Is there a relationship between TOEFL scores and High School percentages?
- Is there a relationship between TOEFL scores and student performance in first year Basic English courses?
- Is the TOEFL score set by the English Department adequate for accepting students as majors of English at the University of Qatar?

Significance of the Study

This study may become significant if issues like the following are taken into consideration:

- The relationship between TOEFL scores and student level at High School and first year courses in the English Department.
- The quality of the English Department graduates.
- Deciding what is the appropriate TOEFL score required for enrollment purposes for English majors.

Method and Sample of the Study

This study is a comparative descriptive one. It depends on the scores of TOEFL and the level of enrolled students in the English

Department for the academic year 2002/2003. It is an attempt to diagnose the current situation with the goal of improving the level of the quality of from the English Department graduates.

The sample consists of (40) students who enrolled in the English Department at the University of Qatar in the Fall Semester of the Academic year 2002/2003.

The sample was used to find relationship between TOEFL scores and High School percentages and English department course grades. However, it was only used to look into the relationship between TOEFL scores and student performance in first year Basic English courses in both semesters. The Multi Variant Analysis of Variant (MANOVA) software SPSS was used to see if there is difference among the different groups of the sample.

Limitations

This study was carried on a small sample due to the fact that there weren't many applicants who joined the English Department in the academic year 2002/2003. In addition, TOEFL in itself, in a sense, acted as a limitation; because not many secondary school graduates were able to apply for the test in time. Another limitation is the standard in English of secondary school students was not previously assessed since there is no access to valid assessment report about their proficiency level. The study is limited to female students only, since the no male students have been accepted in the last three years in the English Department.

Discussion

Taking into consideration that entrance TOEFL score for the English Department at the University of Qatar is 425, both samples

were classified into three groups according to the achievement of TOEFL scores as (Table 2) shows:

Table (2)
TOEFL Scores Distribution

Group	TOEFL Score
1	500 and higher
2	450-499
3	425-449

To answer the questions raised in the present study, further categorizations were made. Each question will be discussed separately.

Is there a relationship between TOEFL scores and High School percentages?

The Sample was further classified in each group into the following categories: Number of students in each group – High school Percentage – TOEFL Score (For details see at Appendix 2). This categorization is necessary to answer the first question of the Study that deals with the relationship between High Schools overall achievement percentages and TOEFL scores. Table 3 for each sample indicates the general view of the outcome of the tables in Appendix 2:

Table (3)
TOEFL Scores & High Schools Achievement

Group	TOEFL Score	Number of Students	TOEFL Scores Average	High School Score & (Standard Deviation)
1	500 and higher	10	509	91.22 (6.94)
2	450-499	14	473	86.72(7.00)
3	425-449	16	434	88.17(5.25)

From table 3 and the standard deviation scores, we may make two main conclusions: (i) there is a positive relationship between high school scores and TOEFL score in group (1) as indicated in the table above; (ii) But in groups (2) and (3) in the relationship between TOEFL scores and High school score is slightly different and may very well indicate that there is no relation between High School achievement and TOEFL scores. Also, in the sample, Group (2) has lower High School percentage average than Group (3); however, Group (3) has higher TOEFL score average than Group (2). In other words, it can be safely said that High School results do not necessarily indicate or reflect High TOEFL scores for groups (2) and (3) of the sample. A student who achieves "HIGH" High School percentage does not necessarily achieve "HIGH" TOEFL score, and vice versa, a student who achieves "LOW" High School percentage does not necessarily achieve "LOW" TOEFL score.

Is there a relationship between TOEFL scores and student performance in first year Basic English courses?

The following tables show students performance in the English Department at (QU) in the Basic English language courses (See Appendix 1 for course description) in each sample based on the three groups divisions. The sample shows students grades over the whole academic year 2002/2003 (Two semesters). The balanced MANOVA was used to test the equality means gave significant evidence for Extrusion and Additive main effects at a level of 0.05 see (Table 4). The Standard Deviation for all courses shows that group (1) in the sample is the best group and best in performance in the courses of the English Department. The next two tables show students achievement averages according to the three-group TOEFL divisions. The tables show the course number & Standard Deviation, the number of students who took each course, the average score percentage, and the average grade.

Table (4)
Standard Deviation For All Courses

Group	1st Semester courses					
	Student	212110 & Standard Deviation	Student	212112 & Standard Deviation	Student	212114 & Standard Deviation
1	10	83.27 (7.34)	10	79.53(12.41)	10	81.17(7.50)
2	14	71.47(9.23)	14	69.71(7.01)	14	68.72(10.55)
3	16	69.80(9.06)	16	63.66(9.79)	16	63.87(11.00)
	2nd Semester courses					
Group	Student	212111& Standard Deviation	Student	212113& Standard Deviation	Student	212115& Standard Deviation
1	10	81.35(7.36)	9	88.49(4.89)	10	76.69(7.28)
2	12	71.68(8.80)	13	75.82(12.31)	11	69.64(6.57)
3	13	65.01(6.33)	12	79.48(6.31)	10	65.95(4.28)

These tables show the averages scores and grades for the students in groups (1, 2) and (3) of the sample. They prove that group (1) students are the highest in average It can be safely stated that these results show that the higher TOEFL scores are the better the grade achievement for students of the Department of English at the University of Qatar.

The following table shows that the level of the TOEFL score affects the performance of students among the different groups in the each course; and group (1) almost in all cases has the best performance (See Table 5).

Table (5)
TOEFL Scores & Student Performance in All Courses

Dependent Variable	(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference(I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.[a]	99% Confidence Interval for Difference	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Course 212110	1.00	2.00	8.176	3.130	.015	-.549	19.602
		3.00	11.774	3.201	.001	2.851	20.696
	2.00	1.00	-8.176	3.130	.015	-16.902	.549
		3.00	3.597	2.956	.235	-4.643	11.837
	3.00	1.00	-11.774	3.201	.001	-20.696	-2851
		2.00	-3.597	2.956	.235	-11.837	4.643
Course 212112	1.00	2.00	7.652	3.083	.020	-.941	16.245
		3.00	10.816	3.153	.002	2.028	19.603
	2.00	1.00	-7.652	3.083	.020	-16.245	.941
		3.00	-3.164	2.911	.287	-4.951	11.279
	3.00	1.00	-10.816*	3.153	.002	-19.603	-2.028
		2.00	-3.164	2.911	.287	-11.279	4.951
Course 212114	1.00	2.00	9.008	4.186	.041	-2.661	20.677
		3.00	11.953*	4.281	.010	2.060E-02	23.883
	2.00	1.00	-9.008	4.186	.041	-20.677	2.661
		3.00	2.945	3.953	.463	-8.074	13.964
	3.00	1.00	-11.953*	4.281	.010	-23.886	-2.060E-02
		2.00	-2.945	3.953	.463	-13.964	8.074
Course 212111	1.00	2.00	8.133	3.212	.018	-.821	17.087
		3.00	14.334*	3.285	.000	5.177	23.490
	2.00	1.00	-8.133	3.212	0.18	-17.087	.821
		3.00	6.201	3.033	.052	-2.254	14.656
	3.00	1.00	-14.334*	3.285	.000	-23.490	-5.177
		2.00	-6.201	3.033	.052	-14656	2.254
Course 212113	1.00	2.00	6.671	3.531	.071	-3.173	16.514
		3.00	5.125	3.611	.168	-4.937	15.194
	2.00	1.00	-6.671	3.531	.071	-16.514	3.173
		3.00	-1.542	3.335	.648	-10.837	7.753
	3.00	1.00	-5.128	3.611	.168	-15.194	4.937
		2.00	1.542	3.335	.648	-7.753	10.837
Course 212115	1.00	2.00	8.245*	2.814	.007	.402	16.088
		3.00	11.920*	2.877	.000	3.900	19.940
	2.00	1.00	-8.245*	2.814	.007	-16.088	-.402
		3.00	3.675	2.657	.179	-3.731	11.081
	3.00	1.00	-11.920*	2.877	.000	-19.940	-3.900
		2.00	-3.75	2.657	.179	-11.81	3.371

Based on estimated marginal means

*. The Mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

a. Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Least Significant Difference (Equivalent to no adjustments)

Is the TOEFL score set by the English Department adequate for accepting students as majors of English at the University of Qatar?

From the results in the sections above, it is clear from the sample that the higher the score is in the TOEFL the better the performance of students will be in the English Department courses. Since the students in group (1) scored 500 points or higher in the TOEFL, and group (2) students scored 450-499 points in the TOEFL, and group (3) students scored 425-449 points in the TOEFL, and based on statistic results it is clear that the current entrance score for the English Department is inadequate. A different entrance TOEFL score should considered.

Conclusion

This study has answered the questions of study that deal with: The relationship between TOEFL scores and student level at High School and first year courses in the English Department; the quality of the English Department graduates; and deciding what should be the appropriate TOEFL score required for enrollment purposes for English majors. It can be concluded, as an answer for the first question, that the higher the High School percentages is the more possible that a student will score higher in the TOEFL. As an answer for the second question, there appears to be strong relationship between TOEFL scores and achievement in the English Department First year language courses and MANOVA tests proved. Finally, a logical answer for the last question is that the scores currently set by the English Department for entrance purposes is not adequate; therefore, it is highly recommended that the Department of English should consider raising the TOEFL score upon which it accepts its students. If quality is one of the aims for this department, then the intake of students as majors should depend on higher TOEFL scores.

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Appendix (1)
Course Description

BA 212110 English (1)

Credit : 4 hours Contact : 6 hours Pre-Requisite : None

The course is designed to introduce students to the process of reading and oral communication. It provides the students with a wide range of reading and oral communication skills/strategies that help them become efficient readers and speakers of English. The course focuses on reading comprehension and vocabulary development in context, listening comprehension, pronunciation and speaking skills. Course materials and textbooks will be selected to reflect the pedagogical content of the course.

BA 212111 English (2)

Credit : 4 hours Contact : 6 hours Pre-Requisite : BA 212110

The course is a continuation of *BA English* (1) and focuses on developing the same skills at a more advanced level. The emphasis remains on students' practical use of English. Some attention will be given to differences between written and spoken English (with the aim of eliminating errors resulting from confusing the modes) and to conventions of punctuation.

BA 212112 Grammar (1)

Credit : 2 hours Contact : 4 hours Pre-Requisite : None

The course introduces students to basic syntactic categories, or parts of speech. It pays considerable attention to devices for expressing time, aspect and voice and to development of the students' understanding of how these are used appropriately in context. Continuous attention will be paid to subject-verb agreement throughout the series of grammar courses.

BA 212112 Grammar (2)

Credit : 2 hours Contact : 4 hours Pre-Requisite : BA 212112

The course is a continuation of *BA Grammar* (1) examining in addition modality, negation, the use of determiners and major syntactic and collocational properties of phrasal verb. The students are also encouraged to practice question formation.

BA 212114 Writing (1)

Credit : 2 hours Contact : 4 hours Pre-Requisite : None

The goal of this course is the writing of paragraphs. Students will work on sentences and the combination of sentences. Paying additional attention to punctuation and spelling. They will also work on the discovery or creation of ideas and in organizing them into paragraphs showing clear topics, developmental points and conclusions.

BA 212115 Writing (2)

Credit : 2 hours Contact : 4 hours Pre-Requisite : BA 212114

Building on paragraph-writing skills of *BA Writing (1)*, this course will concentrate on short essays of three paragraphs. The students will develop their abilities further to construct more complex sentences and to combine them using suitable transitions. The course will move toward more formal outlining or organizing ideas into clearly stated themes, or purposes, supporting statements and conclusionary remarks.

Appendix (2)
TOEFL Scores and Secondary School Percentages

Sample (1)

Group (1)			Group (2)			Group (3)		
Student	HS %	TOEFL	Student	HS %	TOEFL	Student	HS %	TOEFL
1	93.16	527	1	84.94	497	1	89.66	447
2	88.77	517	2	91.26	493	2	92.77	443
3	97.33	517	3	96.44	490	3	90	440
4	95.77	513	4	84.94	490	4	96.66	437
5	91.11	510	5	74.11	490	5	88.77	437
6	88.1	507	6	83.55	473	6	80.68	437
7	89.83	503	7	89.42	470	7	92.23	437
8	96.94	500	8	91.44	470	8	93.88	433
9	96.94	500	9	88.5	467	9	91.55	433
10	74.22	500	10	95.83	463	10	76.61	433
	912.17	**5094**	11	75.27	457	11	88.55	430
			12	78	457	12	82.66	430
			13	90.33	457	13	90.26	430
			14	90.11	453	14	86.88	427
				1214.14	**6627**	15	85.82	427
						16	83.5	427
							1410.48	**6948**
Average			Average			Average		
	91.217	**509.4**		**86.724**	**473.35**		**88.155**	**434.25**

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درجات امتحان التوفل كمتطلب قبول بقسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة قطر

نور سلطان العيسى*

الملخص

استهدفت هذه الدراسة العلاقة بين الدرجات التي حصلت عليها الطالبات المتقدمات لقسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة قطر في امتحان التوفل ونسبهن المئوية في نتائج الثانوية العامة من جهة ، كما استهدفت العلاقة بين الدرجات التي حصلت عليها نفس الطالبات في امتحان التوفل ونتائجهن في مقررات اللغة الإنجليزية بالقسم في السنة الأولى من جهة أخرى. وتمت دراسة نتائج عينة من الطالبات اللاتي التحقن بالقسم في الفصل الأول من العام الجامعي (خريف ٢٠٠٢/٢٠٠٣). وقد توصلت الدراسة إلى عدة نتائج. ففيما يتعلق بالجزء الأول من الدراسة توصلت الدراسة إلى وجود علاقة بين الدرجات التي حصلت عليها الطالبات في امتحان التوفل والنسب التي حصلن عليها في الثانوية العامة أي أن حصول الطالبة على نسبة عالية في الثانوية العامة، قد يعني حصولها على درجة عالية في امتحان التوفل والعكس صحيح. أما بالنسبة إلى الجزء الثاني من الدراسة جاءت النتيجة المهمة في وجود علاقة وطيدة بين درجة التوفل ودرجات الطالبات في مقررات اللغة الإنجليزية بالقسم حيث وجد أنه كلما ارتفعت الدرجة التي حصلت عليها الطالبة في التوفل كلما كانت الدرجات التي حصلت عليها في مقررات القسم أفضل. وبناء على هاتين النتيجتين أوصت الدراسة برفع درجة التوفل التي يقبل الطلاب على أساسها بغرض الحصول على نوعية أفضل من الخريجين.

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