

TOEFL ITP Trainer Training for Teachers at Pondok Pesantren Bumi Shalawat

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ABSTRACT

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This community engagement program addressed the need to strengthen the capacity of teachers at Pondok Pesantren Bumi Shalawat Sidoarjo to serve as internal TOEFL ITP trainers. The program was conducted from September to October 2025 and involved 15 teachers. It employed a participatory training and mentoring approach through needs analysis, pre-test, workshops on TOEFL ITP sections, item analysis practice, lesson-plan development, microteaching, post-test evaluation, and follow-up planning. The results indicated measurable improvement. Participants' understanding of TOEFL ITP increased from 75% before the program to 100% after the program, while teaching readiness increased from 35% to 80%. The development of training products, including lesson plans, practice materials, and follow-up plans, also improved by 50%. These results show that the program strengthened teachers' conceptual understanding, pedagogical readiness, and institutional capacity to initiate an internal TOEFL ITP training program. The novelty of the program lies in its train-the-trainer orientation, which focuses on empowering teachers as local facilitators rather than preparing them merely as test takers. Overall, the program contributed to teacher empowerment and provided a practical foundation for sustainable TOEFL ITP support in Islamic boarding school settings.

INTRODUCTION

Academic English proficiency has become a strategic need for educational institutions, teachers, and students seeking wider access to higher education, scholarships, and academic networks. In this context, TOEFL ITP is widely used as a measure of academic English proficiency, particularly for internal selection, proficiency mapping, and preparation for further study. Recent studies have shown that TOEFL preparation programs can contribute to score improvement, academic readiness, and clearer learning orientation when they are designed in a structured and needs-based manner (Maharani & Putro, 2021; Rifiyanti et al., 2023; Lastari et al., 2025).

The need for TOEFL ITP training in educational institutions is not limited to students; it is also closely related to teachers' readiness. Teachers function as key facilitators who explain test formats, guide test-taking strategies, analyze learners' weaknesses, and prepare relevant practice materials. However, studies in Indonesia indicate that teachers still encounter challenges in teaching TOEFL preparation, especially in relation to item characteristics, diverse learner abilities, and effective instructional strategies (Akmal et al., 2020). Another study also reported that learners have varying perceptions of offline and online TOEFL ITP preparation classes, suggesting that teachers need adaptive pedagogical competence to manage training effectively (Damanik & Pasaribu, 2025).

From a professional development perspective, TOEFL ITP teacher training is closely linked to language assessment literacy. Language assessment literacy includes teachers' understanding of test purposes, measured constructs, validity, reliability, score interpretation, and the use of test results to support learning. International studies

emphasize that language teachers require continuous training in this area to make accurate and responsible assessment decisions (Vogt et al., 2020; Weng & Shen, 2022). In Indonesia, the need to strengthen EFL teachers' assessment literacy has also been reported at both secondary and tertiary levels, especially in assessment planning, task development, and the use of test results for instructional improvement (Zulaiha & Mulyono, 2020; Zulaiha et al., 2020; Damayanti et al., 2024).

Pondok Pesantren Bumi Shalawat Sidoarjo, as an Islamic boarding school-based educational institution, needs to strengthen teachers' internal capacity to assist students in meeting academic English demands. The pesantren context differs from commercial test-preparation institutions because learning takes place within distinctive institutional routines, character-building practices, and academic agendas. Therefore, training that only focuses on test-taking tricks is insufficient. This community engagement program was designed as a train-the-trainer program so that teachers could understand TOEFL ITP not only as a test but also as a basis for contextual, measurable, and sustainable instructional development. This model aligns with systematic review findings showing that effective teacher training commonly integrates theory, practice, collaboration, reflection, and feedback (Puspawati et al., 2024).

Based on this background, this community engagement program aimed to: (1) improve teachers' understanding of the structure, constructs, and instructional strategies of TOEFL ITP; (2) train teachers to develop TOEFL ITP training materials suited to students' needs; (3) increase teachers' readiness to serve as internal trainers; and (4) initiate a TOEFL ITP train-the-trainer model that can be sustained independently within the pesantren environment.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT METHOD

This community engagement program employed a participatory training and mentoring approach. This approach was selected because the target participants were not positioned merely as recipients of materials; instead, they were actively involved in needs identification, item-analysis practice, teaching-material development, microteaching, reflection, and follow-up planning. A participatory model was also important to ensure that the resulting training model was aligned with the institutional context of the pesantren.

The target community consisted of 15 teachers at Pondok Pesantren Bumi Shalawat Sidoarjo who were involved in English instruction or academic mentoring. The training was conducted from September to October 2025. Participants were selected based on their willingness to attend the entire training series and their commitment to participate in the follow-up implementation of an internal TOEFL ITP program. With a relatively small number of participants, the training could be implemented intensively through discussion, item-analysis practice, material development, and microteaching.

The program was implemented in five stages: needs analysis, diagnostic pre-test, TOEFL ITP workshops, practice and microteaching, and evaluation with follow-up planning. The stages are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Stages Of the TOEFL ITP Trainer Training Program.

Stage	Activity	Output	Partner Participation
1	Needs analysis through initial discussion, questionnaire, and coordination with the partner.	Training needs map and participant profile.	The partner communicated institutional needs and nominated participants.
2	Diagnostic pre-test on TOEFL ITP understanding and program orientation.	Baseline data on participants' competence.	Participants completed the pre-test and agreed on the training mechanism.
3	Workshops on listening, structure and written expression, reading, and TOEFL ITP teaching strategies.	Improved conceptual understanding.	Participants discussed actively and practiced item analysis.
4	Practice in material development, practice-item design, and microteaching.	Draft lesson plans, exercises, and learning-monitoring rubrics.	Participants conducted teaching simulations and exchanged feedback.
5	Post-test, reflection, program evaluation, and follow-up planning.	Evidence of improvement and sustainability plan.	The partner and participants prepared an internal implementation plan.

The instruments used in this program included a needs-analysis questionnaire, TOEFL ITP understanding pre-test and post-test, microteaching observation rubric, training-product assessment sheet, and participant reflection sheet. The pre-test and post-test were used to examine changes in participants' understanding of test structure, instructional strategies, and error analysis. The observation rubric was used to evaluate participants' readiness when practicing TOEFL ITP teaching.

Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively through means, percentages, score differences, and improvement percentages. Based on the program data, participants' average understanding of TOEFL ITP increased from 75% to 100%. Their readiness to teach TOEFL ITP increased from 35% to 80%, while the development of training products improved by 50%. Qualitative data from observations, reflections, and discussions were analyzed thematically to identify changes in understanding, teaching readiness, implementation challenges, and sustainability opportunities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Overall, the community engagement program conducted from September to October 2025 received positive responses from the 15 participating teachers and the partner institution. At the initial stage, teachers indicated that they needed training that not only explained the structure of TOEFL ITP but also equipped them to teach it systematically in the pesantren context. This initial condition showed that the partner’s need was not merely a short course but internal capacity building that could continue after the community engagement program ended.

The measurement results showed improvement in three main indicators. Participants’ understanding of TOEFL ITP increased from 75% before the program to 100% after the program. TOEFL ITP teaching readiness increased from 35% to 80%. In addition, the availability and completeness of training products improved by 50%, especially in the form of lesson plans, practice items, and follow-up plans. These changes are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Changes In Training Outcomes Based on Program Indicators.

Indicator	Before the Program	After the Program	Improvement	Notes
Average TOEFL ITP understanding	75%	100%	25 percentage points; 33.33% relative increase	Based on the TOEFL ITP understanding pre-test and post-test.
TOEFL ITP teaching readiness	35%	80%	45 percentage points; 128.57% relative increase	Based on microteaching rubric and training observation.
Training product development	Limited	More complete products available	50%	Products included lesson plans, practice items, and follow-up plans.
Follow-up plan	Not yet structured	Workshop for developing varied training materials	Established	Serves as the basis for TOEFL ITP clinics or regular classes.

The visualization in Figure 1 shows clear improvement in the two main quantitative indicators. TOEFL ITP understanding increased by 25 percentage points, or approximately 33.33% in relative terms. Teaching readiness increased by 45 percentage

points, or approximately 128.57% in relative terms. This increase indicates that the training strengthened not only conceptual understanding but also teachers' confidence and pedagogical readiness to serve as internal trainers.

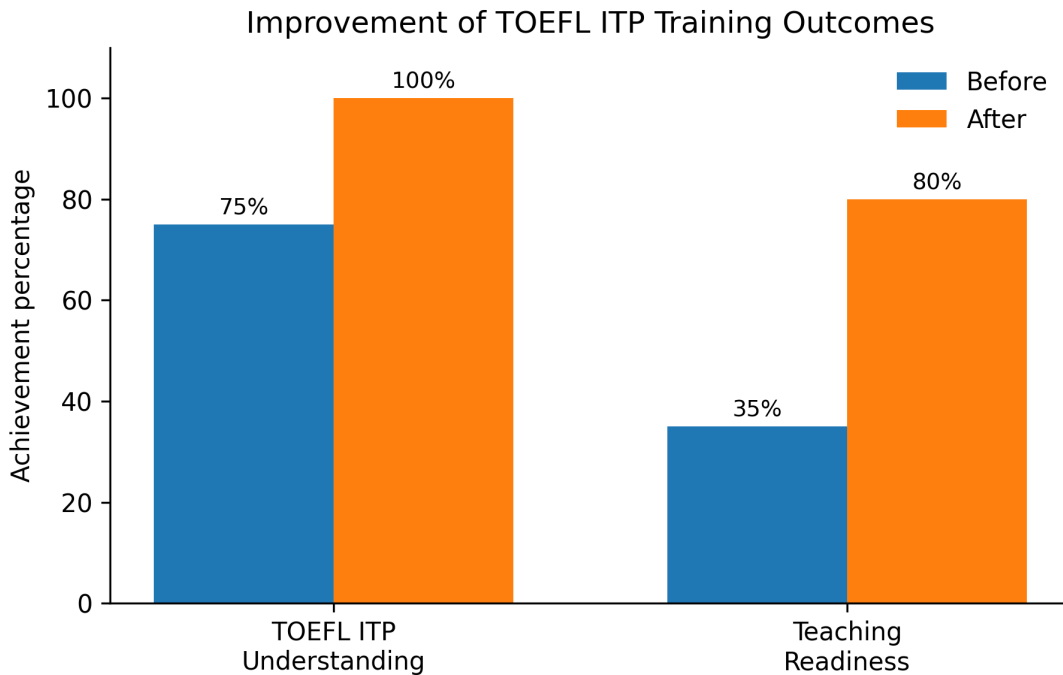


Figure 1. Improvement In Participants' TOEFL ITP Understanding and Teaching Readiness

In terms of substantive outputs, the program produced at least three major achievements. First, participants gained a more systematic understanding of the TOEFL ITP structure, particularly listening comprehension, structure and written expression, and reading comprehension. Second, participants began to connect students' error patterns with more specific instructional strategies. Third, participants developed initial training products such as session plans, practice items, and follow-up plans that could be further developed into an internal pesantren program.

The microteaching activities showed that participants benefited from concrete feedback on how to model test-taking strategies, explain the rationale behind answer choices, manage practice time, and close sessions with error reflection. This finding is important because the success of trainer training depends not only on content mastery but also on pedagogical ability to transfer learning strategies to students.

Discussion

The findings show that TOEFL ITP training for teachers becomes more effective when positioned as needs-based professional development. The increase in TOEFL ITP understanding from 75% to 100% indicates that the materials helped participants understand test structure, item types, and teaching strategies more systematically. This finding is consistent with studies by Maharani and Putro (2021), Kaniadewi and Asyifa (2022), and Lastari et al. (2025), which reported that structured TOEFL preparation programs can improve participants' outcomes.

The increase in teaching readiness from 35% to 80% also demonstrates the value of the train-the-trainer orientation for strengthening teacher capacity. In this community engagement program, the focus was not only on improving participants' individual competence but also on preparing teachers to become TOEFL ITP learning facilitators in their institution. Thus, the program moved beyond a material-transfer model toward a more sustainable teacher-empowerment model.

From the perspective of language assessment literacy, this program confirms that teachers need adequate understanding of test constructs and score interpretation. This finding aligns with Vogt et al. (2020) and Weng and Shen (2022), who emphasize the importance of language assessment literacy training for language teachers. In the Indonesian context, this urgency is also supported by Zulaiha and Mulyono (2020), Zulaiha et al. (2020), and Damayanti et al. (2024), who reported that EFL teachers still need support in assessment planning, implementation, and the use of assessment results. Sustainability is another important value of the program. Compared with training models that aim only at short-term score improvement, the train-the-trainer approach has greater potential for medium-term impact because the institution gains internal human resources who can continue the program. This finding is consistent with the systematic review by Puspawati et al. (2024), which shows that teacher training integrating theory, practice, reflection, and collaboration tends to have a stronger impact on practice change.

The pesantren context also provides a distinctive contribution. The training program must consider students' activity schedules, institutional support, and the need to adapt materials to the local learning culture. The main implementation challenges include differences in teachers' initial proficiency, limited time, and the need for sustainable teaching materials. Therefore, follow-up actions are recommended, including the development of an internal item bank, regular TOEFL ITP clinics, further classroom observation, and monitoring of students' learning outcomes in the months following the program.

CONCLUSION

The community engagement program in the form of TOEFL ITP trainer training for 15 teachers at Pondok Pesantren Bumi Shalawat Sidoarjo, conducted from September to October 2025, was relevant to strengthening teacher capacity and institutional independence in academic English development. The program was designed through needs analysis, pre-test, workshops, material-development practice, microteaching, and evaluation. The results showed an increase in TOEFL ITP understanding from 75% to 100%, an increase in teaching readiness from 35% to 80%, and a 50% improvement in training products. These outcomes indicate that the train-the-trainer approach can strengthen conceptual understanding, pedagogical skills, and institutional readiness to develop an internal TOEFL ITP program. Follow-up programs are recommended in the form of internal item-bank development, regular TOEFL ITP clinics, and implementation mentoring to sustain the impact of the training.

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